

WORLD/A19

Former British PM Blair converts to Catholicism

website: www.inquirer.net

WORLD/A20

Pro-Thaksin party claims victory in first post-coup Thai polls

Young RP singing star shines abroad

By Marinel R. Cruz
Entertainment

THE SWEDES SAW THE STAR FIRST. Before her 4-minute YouTube video found its way to "The Ellen DeGeneres Show" and 15-year-old Charice Pempengco was personally invited by the host to

YOUNG RP/A9

Cops rearrest Jalosjos

Prospects dismal GMA popularity will improve

By Amando Doronila

THE ADMINISTRATION OF President Macapagal-Arroyo ends 2007 battered by the public opinion verdict that she is the "most corrupt president in Philippine history," surpassing Presidents Ferdinand Marcos and Joseph Estrada, who looted public wealth on a colossal scale and were subsequently ousted.

Ms Arroyo enters the New Year plagued by this stigma that has marred the spectacular 7-percent gross domestic product growth last year, running for 30 quarters, putting the economic performance close to the leaders of developing economies in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations—Vietnam, 8.83 percent, and Cambodia, 9.2 percent.

According to Asian Development Bank figures for 2007 and 2008, the Philippine growth for 2007 surpassed the ASEAN Nine's average growth of 6.3

percent and the average for Southeast and East Asia of 8.5 percent.

However, there is doubt whether the Philippines would sustain this growth momentum in 2008. The ADB forecasts that the Philippine growth will likely slow down in 2008, as it gets caught up in the volatile global financial market.

East Asian growth is expected to moderate, as the richer economies will be weighed down by rising oil prices, the global credit squeeze, and turmoil in foreign exchange markets.

The ADB predicts that the Philippine GDP will remain high at 6.4 percent in 2008, but slower than the 7 percent projected in 2007.

This means that the Arroyo administration cannot tout growth to focus Philippine public opinion to compensate for issues of governance, which are likely to be highlighted by the

PROSPECTS/AB



JALOSJOS: I feel bad, frustrated and disappointed.

By Christine O. Avendaño

MALACAÑANG EXPECTS JUSTICE Secretary Raul Gonzalez to get to the bottom of how Romeo Jalosjos managed to fly the coop, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said yesterday.

"Somebody must have assisted him," Ermita said of the convicted child rapist and former lawmaker, adding that Malacañang had not authorized the latter's departure from the New Bilibid Prisons (NBP) in Muntinlupa City and subsequent travel to his

home province of Zamboanga del Norte.

In a phone interview, Ermita said Malacañang expected Gonzalez to "better investigate [the case] properly."

He said that when he spoke with President Macapagal-Arroyo upon being informed of the matter at noon on Saturday, she indicated that she wanted it looked into and lamented why the Palace seemed to know of such things only after these had happened.

DAPITAN/A6

Palace caught flat-footed by Dapitan escapade

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

SEN. RICHARD GORDON AND Cebu Gov. Gwen Garcia have stoked rumors of a potential administration-backed tandem in the 2010 polls after both politicians flirted with the idea of running together during a meeting in vote-rich Cebu province more than a week ago.

Gordon has been tagged as one of the candidates being considered by the administration for presidential candidate for 2010. Garcia, a member of the Kabalikat ng Mamamayang Pilipino (Kampi) political party of President Macapagal-Arroyo, has been floated as a potential candidate for vice president or senator.

GORDON-GARCIA/A9

claim a 144-hectare land from food giant San Miguel Corp. (SMC).

The farmers arrived at around 7:30 a.m. at the Lumbia Airport in Cagayan de Oro City in Misamis Oriental on board a C-130 plane. They were greeted by supporters from the Church and nongovernment organizations led by Archbishop Antonio Ledesma.

From there, they traveled for more than an hour to Sumilao, where a modest Christmas party of their group, the Mapalad Multipurpose Cooperative, had been prepared.

"We return full of hope, hope that is buoyed by the strong support we received all over the country," said farmer Toto Anilao, referring specifically to the initiatives of the Roman

Catholic Church led by Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales.

"We were able to gain the support of the different sections of our society. We are back and we are hopeful," said Anilao in a statement.

Samuel Merida, Mapalad president, said the farmers would use the Christmas break

55 FARMERS/A4

Reds OK 4-day truce after attack in Samar

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
Inquirer Southern Luzon
and Joey A. Gabieta
Inquirer Visayas

THE COMMUNIST REBEL LEADERSHIP yesterday announced that its forces would silence their guns for four days in deference to the holiday season, hours after about 100 guerrillas attacked a police station on Samar Island and stripped its defenders of their weapons.

A visitor at the police station was killed during the attack.

In a statement sent to the Inquirer, the spokesperson for the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal, said the guerrillas would observe their ceasefire on Dec. 24 and 25 and then again on Dec. 31 and Jan. 1 as a matter of policy and in respect of the Filipinos' holiday tradition.

The military has already unilaterally declared its own 22-day holiday truce, which starts

REDS OK/A4



HOMEBOUND farmers from Sumilao, Bukidnon, board a military cargo plane at Villamor Air Base for Cagayan de Oro City.

JESS YUSON

55 farmers back in Sumilao—and hopeful

By Ryan D. Rosario
and Ma. Cecilia Rodriguez
Inquirer Mindanao
and TJ Burgonio in Manila

SUMILAO, BUKIDNON—THE 55 Higaonon farmers yesterday returned to their homeland after a 1,700-kilometer walk to Manila over two months with high hopes that they would eventually re-

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Visayas and Mindanao will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers.

Metro Manila Partly Cloudy	Infra-Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Lanang Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clerk Zinc Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tugatay Partly Cloudy	Zambanga	Cloudy with Rains
Lagupit Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

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Second FRONT PAGE

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Oust-Villar plot slammed

'Selfish motives' behind attempt, says Cayetano

By Gil Cabacungan

WHAT'S INSIDE



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Glorietta blast

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OVERBOOKED FLIGHTS

RP-bound Pinoys stranded in HK

By Tessa Quismundo and Blanche Rivera

MANY FILIPINOS RUSHING HOME TO Manila for the holidays were stranded for hours at the Hong Kong airport on Saturday after they were bumped off their scheduled flights which turned out to be overbooked.

Tempers flared for at least 40 passengers booked for an 11 a.m. Cebu Pacific Air flight from Hongkong after they were made to wait for almost 12 hours at the airport before they could board a flight for Manila.

As it turned out, the airline had overbooked, leaving no more seats for passengers who had purchased their tickets as early as September.

"The airline overbooked. We have no control over this," said Chan Cheung-Yin, manager at the Hong Kong airport check-in counter that handles Cebu Pacific.

Chan counted at least 40 passengers who arrived at 9 a.m. on Saturday but found the check-in counters already closed when it was still two hours away before their sched-

uled flight to Manila. Seats had run out that fast even for passengers who had bought their tickets months ahead.

"The overbooking started the other day. This is crazy. It was not this bad last year. It's very hard for us," Chan said in an interview at the Hong Kong airport.

Reached for comment in Manila, Cebu Pacific said Saturday's booking problem was because of an "overflow of passengers" leaving for Manila. The airline had to make a fourth trip (Manila-Hong Kong-Manila), from the usual three, to accommodate the number of passengers who wanted to be home for the holidays.

To compensate for the inconvenience, Cebu Pacific gave roundtrip travel vouchers (Manila-Hong Kong-Manila) for passengers who were bumped off their scheduled flights.

The last flight at 1:30 a.m. Sunday carried 133 passengers, including migrant workers and other Hong Kong-based Filipinos who could not get seats

in earlier flights of Cebu Pacific and other airlines.

Cebu Pacific said 50 passengers who were bumped off the 11 a.m. flight were placed on a 7:25 p.m. flight. The flight, however, left Hong Kong at 9:05 p.m. and arrived in Manila at 10:30 p.m.

Bry Rosapa, a domestic helper from Cavite, had purchased her ticket in November, choosing Cebu Pacific over other airlines for its cheaper fare. As she was going home for just a brief visit, she booked the 11 a.m. flight so she would arrive in Manila at past noon.

"I went to the other airline so I can get a ticket for less, but it turns out you'll just get upset," said Rosapa in Filipino.

Another stranded passenger, Evelyn Perez, had asked her family to travel early from San Pablo, Laguna to the Ninoy Aquino International Airport to avoid traffic. But they had to wait for long hours at the Naia before they finally saw Evelyn.

Australia warns of terror attacks

AUSTRALIA HAS WARNED there could be terrorist attacks in the Philippines over Christmas, although the Asian country's police chief said yesterday security officials had not uncovered a specific threat.

The Australian Embassy posted a travel advisory on its Web site warning Australians to steer clear of places frequented by foreigners, and strongly advised against travel in Mindanao, where al-Qaida-linked militants are active.

Credible information indicates terrorists may be in the advanced stages of planning attacks. Attacks may be imminent and could occur at any time, anywhere in Mindanao," it said.

"Attacks could occur in the lead up to and following the Christmas celebrations," it added, without elaborating or identifying the source of its information.

Philippine National Police chief Director General Avelino Razon said security officials were verifying Australia's warning but have so far detected no specific terror threat anywhere in the country.

The 125,000-strong police force has been placed on "heightened alert" to prevent any attacks and secure crowded public areas, Razon said.

Government forces have been battling a variety of threats led by Marxist guerrillas and at least four Muslim militant groups, including the small but brutal al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf, which is blacklisted by Washington as a terrorist organization.

AP

Erap makes rounds with new jokes

By Kristine L. Alave

MAKING THE ROUNDS OF PARTIES and speaking engagements, deposed president Joseph Estrada regales his audiences with jokes about his six year detention, spiked with political color.

"I was so lonely in my detention-resthouse in Tanay that I often talked to the ducks to amuse myself," began Estrada during a lunch hosted by his son Joseph Victor "JV" Ejercito two weeks ago.

"I said, hello, hello. But they didn't answer me," said Estrada, who was convicted of plunder then pardoned by President Macapagal Arroyo last October.

"So I tried, Hello, Garci. They replied, 'Hello, Ma'am,'" he said. "But I'm not a 'ma'am.' I'm a man."

Estrada said he told the ducks, in obvious reference to a controversial wiretapped conversation between Arroyo and an election commissioner that triggered accusations of electoral cheating in the 2004 elections.

"So the ducks said, 'I'm sorry,'" Estrada concluded, as his predominantly opposition audience burst into laughter, recalling Ms Arroyo's televised apology over the "Hello Garc" scandal.

The 70-year-old former actor can likewise make fun of himself, a trait that has clearly endeared him to his fans and always brings the house down.

On Saturday night, at the prayer rally of the Catholic charismatic group El-Shaddai in Paranaque City, he had his own take on an old Filipino joke about a toughie who meets up with an even tougher character.

"I told (the government), you can file all your cases but I didn't do anything wrong," said Estrada in a tough, booming voice.

"But they jailed me," he said. Then in the expected about-face, he quipped: "Di na kayo mabiro o (can't you take a joke)."

Estrada, famous for his love for wine and women, also told the crowd that he has no intention of running for public office again, adding that he'd rather be a pastor.

At another affair he said his detention in Tanay was so oppressive he had to make adjustments to his personal life. "I have even forgotten how it is to wear shoes. My feet are sweating," he said.

Estrada, who won the presidency in 1998 with the widest vote margin ever, mostly from the poor classes, eventually gets serious.

WASTONG PAGKAIN, ABOT-KAYANG BILHIN'	
BILHIN	PRESYO/kilo
NFA Rice	P18.25
Presyo sa lahat ng Barangay Food Terminal at Tindahan Natin.	
Regular Well Milled	P20-25
Well Milled Rice	P22-29
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Presyo sa palengke sa Metro Manila.	
NUTRI-TIP: Ugalling kumain ng prutas at gulay araw-araw.	
HOTLINE: 0929-4438014	
SOURCE: DA-Bureau of Agricultural Statistics	

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(In exact order)
Mid-Day SUERTRES Evening
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P36,188,861.40

Kiko asks: Where's list of Comelec nominees?

By Dona Pazzibugan

WHERE IS THE LIST OF NOMINEES FOR THE next Commission on Elections chair?

Senate Majority Leader Francis Gilingan said the deadline imposed by the Malacañang search committee for receiving nominees passed two weeks ago but it has not announced the nominees.

"We are still in the dark as to who has been nominated to a truly crucial post. How can we scrutinize the nominees if their names are being withheld," he said.

"This lack of transparency is unacceptable," he continued.

The selection committee formed by President Macapagal-Arroyo released a paid ad last Nov. 28 announcing that it has extended the period for submission of applications and nominations for the vacant Comelec posts until Dec. 6.

Aside from the chair, Malacañang also has to appoint a Comelec commissioner to replace Commissioner Mehoi Sadain, who retired in April 2006.

Malacañang short list

The last Comelec chair, Benjamin Abalos Sr., resigned last Oct. 1 after he was accused of offering former Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri a P200-million bribe to approve the \$329-million National Broadband Network project contract.

Last October, acting Comelec Chair Resurrection Borra disclosed a supposed Malacañang short list that includes two lawyers of ousted President Joseph Estrada—Cagayan de Oro Rep. Rufus Rodriguez and former Sen. Rene Saguisag.

Others on the short list were former Sen. Wigberto Tañada, Howard Calleja, legal counsel of the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting; former University of the East law dean Amado Valdez; senatorial candidate Severo Maluenda Jr. and the late Comelec law department chief Alibon Dalraig.

Borra and Commissioner Florentino Tuason will also retire in February 2008.

The Malacañang search committee is headed by Bernardino Abes, who served as labor secretary and Social Security System chair under the late President Diosdado Macapagal.

The other members are former National Movement for Free Elections chair Jose Concepcion, newspaper columnist Carmen Pedrosa, former Finance Secretary Vicente Jayme and Democrito Mendoza of the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines.



PAMASKONG HANDOG

Vice President Noli de Castro distributes Christmas goodies to Malati City residents under the "Pamaskong Handog" of President Macapagal-Arroyo's People's Governance Mobile Action (PGMA) program. The government gave away goods, health insurance cards, 125 Tesda scholarships, and permits to open Tindahan Natin and Botica ng Barangay during the Dec. 19 gift-giving at the Carmona Sports Complex.

Aging work force of OFWs worries recruiters

By Margaux C. Ortiz

AN AGING MIGRANT WORKFORCE could spell disaster to the country's economy in a few years, according to the local recruitment industry.

Lito Soriano, former president of Philippine Association of Service Exporters Inc. (PASEI), said there should be a strong intervention from both government and private sector to enable new graduates to find high-paying jobs abroad.

"Most of our qualified migrant workers are now in the 35 to 55 age bracket," Soriano, president of Lbs@-

recruitment Solutions Corp., said in an interview.

Soriano lamented that most of the country's graduates—numbering to about 800,000 annually—do not have the qualifications needed for technical jobs abroad.

"We could be facing a disastrous situation in three to five years, when the majority of the present overseas Filipino workers would be retiring from their jobs," Soriano said.

He said that the most important solution to the problem would be to emphasize the importance of technical-vocational (tech-voc) education

as opposed to traditional courses.

"Education stakeholders such as university owners and administrators should invest in vocational training, especially in the provinces," Soriano said.

He emphasized that contrary to what most people think, vocational graduates such as tailors, carpenters, mechanics, technicians, welders, machinists, and pipefitters are in demand abroad.

In the Middle East, these technical workers could earn \$500 to \$800 a month. In Western countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia

and New Zealand, their salaries range from \$1,500 to \$7,000 a month.

"A welder in Canada could earn a whopping \$7,000, while an ordinary engineer without any specialization could get only \$2,000," Soriano said.

Soriano pointed out that the change in attitude toward vocational education should start from the family itself.

"Parents should encourage their children to take the tech-voc route instead of pressuring them to take up the usual traditional courses," he added.

Wife fears for jailed radioman's life

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE WIFE OF JAILED RADIO COMMENTATOR Alexander Adonis has sought the help of Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez to ensure the safety of her husband who was allegedly taken of detention and then brought to a hospital.

In a Dec. 17 letter addressed to Gonzalez, Gladys Adonis said she was worried that her husband would be harmed during these supposedly unscheduled trips from his prison cell.

Adonis is detained at the Davao Penal Colony. He was convicted of libel for saying that Davao City Rep. Prospero Nograles was allegedly seen running naked in a Manila hotel after he and a woman he was supposedly having an affair with were caught by the woman's husband.

"Although he was reportedly escorted by three to four personnel from the penal farm, I am afraid something [might] happen to him during the travel ... this has already happened in the past when prisoners were shot for allegedly trying to escape. Secretary Gonzalez, we count on you to help us secure the safety of my husband," Adonis' wife said.

She also expressed concern on how Adonis could be pulled out of the detention center when his fellow media practitioners have a difficult time visiting him in jail.

Adonis was brought to the Davao Medical Center from the Davao Penal Colony on Dec. 11 for an "unscheduled checkup."

"We are worried about the security of Lex because of what happened ... does this mean that he can be pulled out of the Penal Farm when some of his friends from the media cannot even visit him freely? We think this is not fair," Adonis' wife said.

Aliens told to get I-Cards by Dec. 31

THE BUREAU OF IMMIGRATION (BI) yesterday reminded foreign nationals in the country that they have only until Dec. 31 to replace their alien certificates of registration (ACR) with the new "I-Card."

BI Commissioner Marcelino Libanan urged foreigners who have not replaced their ACRs to secure their I-Cards as soon as possible to avoid future inconveniences.

"A foreigner who does not replace his ACR with an I-Card can be charged with violating the immigration and alien registration acts and deported for being an improperly documented alien," Libanan said.

The BI chief explained that the bureau has stopped honoring ACRs as proof of a foreigner's legal status since the bureau launched its I-Card project in 2004.

More than 122,000 foreigners have already been issued I-Cards, Libanan said.

"Immigrant visa holders account for about 60 percent of the I-Card applicants while the rest are holders of non-immigrant and special visas," Libanan said. Margaux Ortis

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Oriental Mindoro

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Concordia Quinajon
Pampanga

₱5,000
Ellen Khu
San Juan City

₱1,000
Lucy Colao
Cagayan De Oro

ENTERTAINMENT SHOWCASE
Jessa Briones
Cardona, Rizal

NOKIA 6020
Michelle C. Soriano
Balanga City

NOKIA 5070
Florida P. Vios
Gen. Trias, Cavite

KITCHEN SHOWCASE
Rodulfo Albarico Jr
Pandacan, Mia

COMPUTER SHOWCASE
Mae Ann F. Asumen
Dasmariñas, Cavite

POD SHUFFLE
Ryan Rodriguez
Pampanga

NOKIA 6020
Michelle C. Soriano
Balanga City

POD SHUFFLE
Ryan Rodriguez
Pampanga

₱2,000 WORTH NOCHE BUENA
Lilian B. Alcantara
Caloocan City

₱2,000 SM GIFT CHECK
Charity U. Limbo
Quezon

₱5,000 SM GIFT CHECK
Marissa Ladra
Pasay City

₱2,000 GOLDILOCKS GIFT CHECK
Ramona Depliyan
Taguig City

₱4,000 McDONALD'S GIFT CHECK
Marilou M. Toralba
Novaliches, QC

Winners from Nov. 28 - Dec. 4, 2007

Promo Period: Nov. 28 - Dec. 28, 2007
Per DTI-MCR Permit No. 4382, Series of 2007
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Globe



A TV cameraman documents the departure of the 55 Higaonon farmers from Manila to their homes and loved ones in Mindanao.

JESS YUSON

55 farmers back in Sumilao—and hopeful

From page A1

to rejuvenate and gather their strength for the long struggle ahead.

"We went back home because the next steps in our struggle will take place here," Merida said. He said that in the next few days, the group would challenge the Department of Agrarian Reform to take concrete actions to implement the decision of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"We firmly believe that because of the support of the bishops, the opinions of experts like the former DAR secretaries and

officials and the commitments of President Arroyo, we are confident that there is no more reason for the DAR to drag its feet," he said.

Members of the Archdiocese of Cagayan de Oro and Bukidnon and supporters from various NGOs joined the farmers' motorcade to press their call for the extension of the comprehensive agrarian reform program that is due to expire next year.

After camping out in Manila for more than two weeks, the farmers won a reprieve on Tuesday when Ms Arroyo issued an

order placing the disputed property back under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program.

SMC appeal

But the SMC subsidiary, San Miguel Foods Inc., was given 15 days to appeal this. The DAR said it couldn't issue a notice of coverage yet until the President's order had been declared "final and executory."

The issuance of the notice was just the first step of a tedious process that the farmers had to go through before they could repos-

sess and till the land.

The original landowner, Norberto Quisumbing, sold the property to SMFI in 2002, three years after the Supreme Court affirmed a 1996 Malacañang order converting it into agro-industrial estate.

Tough task

In 2004, the farmers petitioned the government to revoke the conversion order, arguing that SMFI failed to develop the property in five years, and hence, the land should revert back to them under CARP.

The DAR awarded the land to the farmers in 1995.

Also yesterday, the leftist Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas said the farmers' tough task of reclaiming their land would include paying back SMFI some P2.4 billion for its investment in the estate.

Forever in debt

"Yes, technically the land may be theirs but practically speaking they will forever be in debt just trying to pay for that land. This has happened to majority of the so-called beneficiaries of the CARP,"

KMP chair Rafael Mariano said.

Under this scenario, it would be easier for big landlords, like businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco, to entice farmers into agreeing to schemes like growership, joint-venture agreements, cooperatives, leasehold and leaseback arrangements, and take over the lands again.

"That is the bone of contention now why the Palace and SMC are haggling over the price of the land, but as with most cases it will be too steep for farmers," Mariano said.

Reds OK 4-day truce after attack on Samar police station

From page A1

ed Dec. 16 and will end at midnight of Jan. 6.

Rosal made it clear the New People's Army would not let its guard down despite observing a ceasefire.

"All units of the NPA are instructed to closely monitor the movements of the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines), maintain vigilance, be on active defense and decisively counter all forms of treachery by the fascist armed forces," the statement said.

The need to intensify the people's war remains as the Arroyo regime relentlessly pursues its brutal war on terror."

Rosal's statement was furnished the INQUIRER at around 5:15 p.m. yesterday, or about 12 hours after the Samar attack.

The raid occurred three days before the 39th anniversary of the founding of the CPP.

A day before the attack, a regional army commander on Luzon island dismissed as "empty talk" rebel threats to launch major tactical offensives in his area to coincide with the anniversary of the establishment of the CPP on Dec. 26, 1968.

Second assault

Armed with high-powered guns and a grenade launcher, NPA guerrillas raided the police station in Hinabangan town on Samar, setting off a gun battle with defenders in which one visitor was killed in the crossfire, officials said.

It was the second major guerrilla attack since the government-declared truce.

In the Samar incident, the guerrillas stalled the arrival of government reinforcements by setting up a blocking force and planting land mines on a route leading to the Hinabangan town hall, where the police station was located.

One police officer was report-

3-year ceasefire offer a military ruse—Sison

By TJ Burgonio

COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE Philippines (CPP) founding chair Jose Ma. Sison has scoffed at President Macapagal-Arroyo's claim that the communist insurgency would be wiped out by 2010.

Sison, chief political consultant of the CPP-led National Democratic Front, also said the government's offer of a three-year ceasefire was a ruse for the military to attack the rebels during its so-called normal operations.

He made the claim in an e-mail from The Netherlands, where he and several senior leftist leaders live in exile.

"The fake president, Gloria M. Arroyo, continues to rave about destroying the revolutionary movement before 2010 and shows no real remorse for

terrorizing and forcibly displacing more than one million people from their homes and land and for causing the extrajudicial killing, abduction and torture of more than a thousand legal activists," Sison said.

Ms Arroyo said at Friday's anniversary of the Armed Forces that the insurgency would be wiped out by 2010, claiming the guerrillas' strength had been cut down by half from 12,000 in 2001.

Part of psywar

Quoting CPP spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal, Sison said the government wanted the NPA to stop fighting, while the soldiers, policemen and paramilitary forces were free to "attack the people and the revolutionary forces in the name of peace and order."

Sison said the "sham proposal" of AFP Chief of Staff Gen.

Hermogenes Esperon Jr. for a three-year ceasefire was "a cheap psywar trick to tie the hands of the armed revolutionary movement and allow the AFP, PNP and paramilitary forces to attack ... the revolutionary forces with impunity."

Ms Arroyo's statements about the need for such a ceasefire were also also meant to "obscure the gross and systematic human rights violations" by security forces, he said.

Conditions spelled out

Sison said a prolonged ceasefire between the two camps was possible under certain conditions:

- Both sides must agree on the so-called 10 principles in the proposed concise agreement for an immediate and just peace.

- The government must respect the political authority and

had found at the station and at other offices in the town hall.

2nd floor battle

Investigator Insp. William Eloja said the four policemen ran to the second floor of the building, where they engaged the rebels in a gun battle.

Initial PNP reports said the attack was carried out by a rebel unit led by a "Ka Batig" and "Ka Homer."

The other policemen on duty during the raid were identified as PO2 Joel Mastog, PO2 Elizalde Ricalde and PO1 Marlon Platón.

Lt. Col. Jonathan Ponce, commanding officer of the 62nd Infantry Battalion, said the presence of a guerrilla blocking force and the land mines delayed the dispatch of reinforcements.

It was the second major NPA attack on government forces

since Malacañang's unilateral declaration of a suspension of military operations from Dec. 16 to Jan. 6.

PNP Director General Avelino Razon Jr. said it was not yet confirmed if a police officer was indeed missing even as he denied reports that the raiders had taken the police officers' firearms.

"This incident once again proved that the NPA terrorists do not want peace to reign in our country," Lt. Col. Ernesto Torres, Army spokesperson, said.

Fight if provoked

A week ago, three unarmed Marines in civilian clothes were killed in an ambush by the NPA in Palawan.

In his statement, Rosal said all NPA units had been instructed to remain alert against ene-

my operations, "and—if provoked—fend off or repulse its fascist offensives."

According to Rosal, the NPA unilaterally observes military restraint on Christmas and the New Year even if there is no formal declaration of a ceasefire.

"As practiced for many years, the Filipino people, their people's army and revolutionary forces unite in humble traditional holiday celebration and in the commemoration of the anniversary of the Communist Party," Rosal said.

Accomplishment report

He said the NPA's observance of a four-day ceasefire had nothing to do with the government's "totally sham and hypocritical" suspension of combat operations which, he claimed, was only a camouflage for con-

tinuing military operations.

He claimed the military had been completely ignoring its self-declared ceasefire since day one of its effectiveness.

In a recently released accomplishment report, the Armed Forces said it was able to dismantle 13 guerrilla fronts in 2007 and could dismantle 17 more by the first quarter of next year.

The report said these 17 fronts were "in the advance stages of degradation and have a high probability of being either dismantled, downgraded, and dissolved by the first quarter of 2008."

All talk, no action'

Lt. Gen. Rodolfo Obaniana, chief of the Southern Luzon Command, said the rebels had yet to conduct an offensive on the occasion of the CPP anniversary that would have significant impact on the AFP's anti-insurgency campaign in Southern Tagalog and Bicol.

"We are always ready, be it their anniversary or not," Obaniana said in a statement sent to the INQUIRER. "As we have said time and again, the CPP and the New People's Army terrorists' threats are all empty talk but no action."

GMA's timetable

After an ideological split with a 1930s era pro-Soviet communist party that the military defeated in the 1950s, former university professor Jose Maria Sison in 1968 set up the CPP with a Maoist-oriented ideology.

Peace talks between the Arroyo administration and the insurgents bogged down in August 2004 after the rebels' inclusion on the US list of terrorist organizations.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has called for the defeat of the communist insurgency by 2010.

With a report from Nikko Diaz in Manila

COMING SOON

PNP reviewing final report on Glorietta blast

By Alcuin Papa

THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL Police (PNP) is reviewing its final report and comparing it with an initial report submitted by Ayala Land Inc. (ALI) on the cause of the Oct. 19 Glorietta 2 blast which killed 11 people.

"Yes, we are reviewing their initial report and comparing it with our own final report that is due to come out," PNP Chief Director General Avelino Razon told the Inquirer yesterday.

To be included in the final report is a list of those who might be charged for the explosion.

Police said they would file charges of negligence resulting in multiple homicide and serious and slight physical injuries against those responsible for the fatal blast.

Southern Police District (SPD) director Chief Supt. Luiz Ticman said ALI's report, submitted sometime in the beginning of November, was "helpful" in the preparation of their final report on the blast.

Helpful report

"I think the report was helpful. We used some details as reference or guides in our investigation and allowed us to check and double-check some of the aspects of our investigation," Ticman told the Inquirer.

He added that investigators validated and checked some assertions in the report relative to their investigation.

But Ticman declined to say if they agreed with or contested any of the findings in ALI's report, saying all of these will be revealed once they release the PNP's final report to the public.

"Whatever we will reveal in our final report will be based on evidence. There will be only one official report and that will come from us. This report will be used as basis for the filing of charges in relation

to the blast," Ticman said.

Immediately after the blast, the PNP had said that the blast might have been caused by an explosion of a liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) tank. Later, police forensic experts said they found traces of RDX, an ingredient in explosives, at the blast site.

Turnaround

But the next day, PNP made a turnaround and blamed the blast on the accumulation of toxic gases inside the basement of the Glorietta 2 mall. They said experts from the US, Australia and Israel, particularly the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Australian Federal Police (AFP), had worked with them on the investigation and came to the same conclusion.

But ALI, which operates Glorietta 2, disputed the PNP's theory, saying there was no accumulation of gases in the basement. It also called on the PNP to look into other causes while denying the blast was caused by negligence.

ALI's report was based on the findings of local and foreign experts hired by the company to look into the cause of the blast. The company presented the findings of Dr. Stephen Etheridge, an international expert on biogas production, and specialists from the Dr. J H Burgoyne and Partners LLP, both of which pointed out that it was impossible that enough methane or diesel vapor would be produced in the basement of Glorietta 2 to cause the explosion.

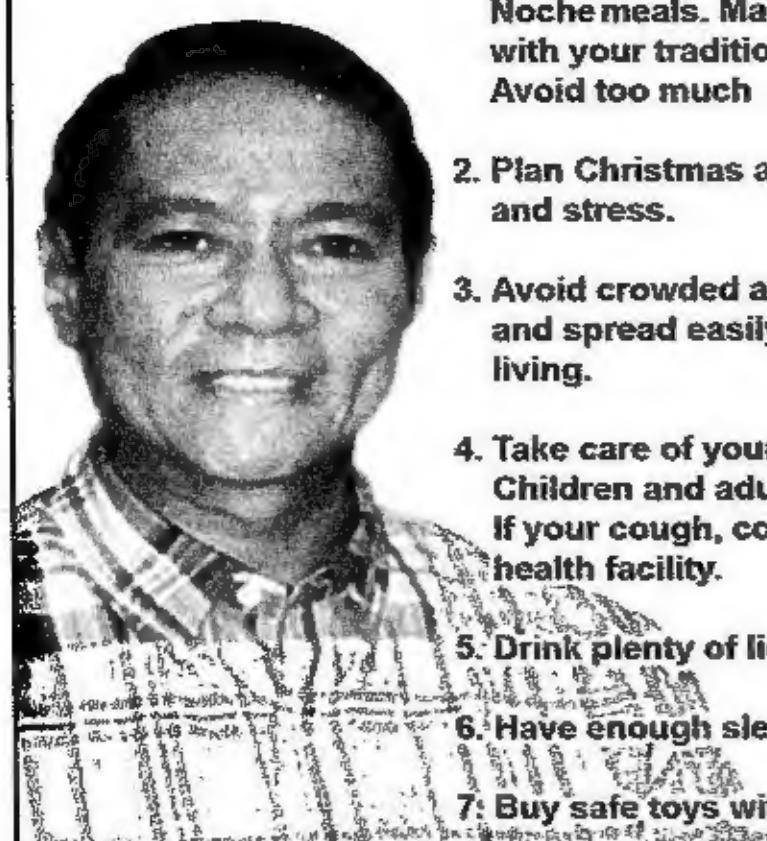
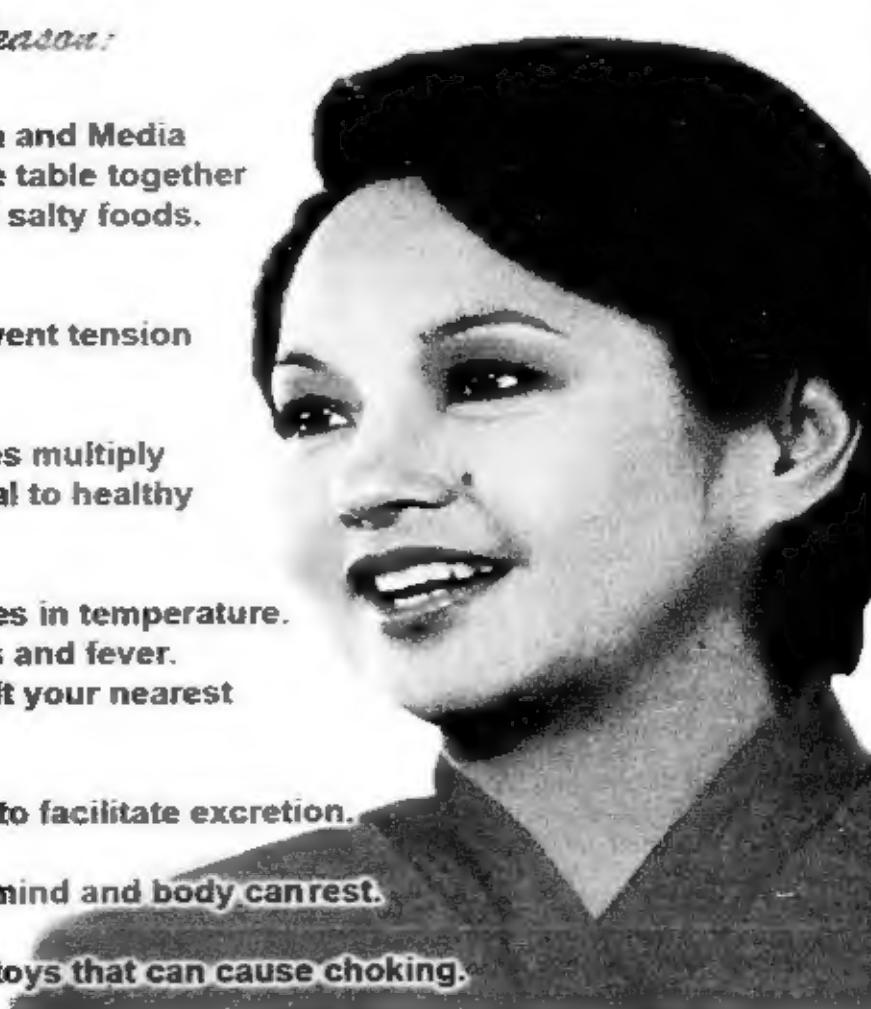
Experts from the University of the Philippines also doubted the PNP theory.

A week ago, the PNP said it was ready to present its findings. But Ticman said their investigators and experts probing the blast asked for more time to review their findings and moved the release of the report to January next year.

HEALTH ADVISORY FOR THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Here are some health tips for the Christmas Season:

1. Be kind to your heart. Prepare a well-balanced Noche Buena and Media Noche meals. Make sure that vegetables and fruits are on the table together with your traditional ham and queso de bola. Avoid fatty and salty foods. Avoid too much drinking and don't smoke.
2. Plan Christmas activities for yourself and your family to prevent tension and stress.
3. Avoid crowded areas because organisms that cause diseases multiply and spread easily. Airy and well-ventilated areas are essential to healthy living.
4. Take care of yourself and your family against sudden changes in temperature. Children and adults may become susceptible to cough colds and fever. If your cough, colds and fever is more than five days, consult your nearest health facility.
5. Drink plenty of liquids. Drink plenty of water and fruit juices to facilitate excretion.
6. Have enough sleep. Give yourself enough sleep so that the mind and body can rest.
7. Buy safe toys with no pointed or sharp edges nor too small toys that can cause choking.

Secretary Francisco T. Duque III
Department of Health

Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo
President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo

**Do not use fireworks and firecrackers during the Holidays.
Make some noise by using the "torotot", pots, pans and
other noise-making gadgets.**

DOH it na!



A POLICE NURSE takes the blood pressure of convicted child rapist Romeo Jalosjos soon after his arrival in Zamboanga City.



A TEARFUL but happy reunion takes place between Jalosjos and his 80-year-old mother Angelina inside the PNP main office at Camp Batalla.

Cops rearrest Jalosjos in Dapitan City

From page A1

mon Penal Colony, which is more than 30 kilometers away from the city center.

Jalosjos said he was forced to go with the arresting officers belonging to the Zamboanga del Norte Provincial Police Office under Senior Supt. Mario Yanga "because they were all fully armed."

"Sumama na lang kami because we don't want to confront armed troops," he said.

Jalosjos said "strong people and within Malacañang" were behind his current troubles. But he refused to identify them.

"Right now I am in a mess so I cannot divulge [their names] yet," he said, adding:

"The system is working very bad for our government, and I feel very bad. I feel so frustrated, so disappointed. And what about the feelings of others expecting to see me free? They are all dumb-founded by the whole thing."

No reporter was allowed to speak with Jalosjos at the San Ramon Penal Colony.

"Vigilance is the only [way] to ensure that Jalosjos will no longer escape from custody," said Chief Supt. Jaime Caringal, police chief of Western Mindanao.

Up to DOJ

In Manila, PNP Director General Avelino Razon Jr. said Jalosjos would remain at the San Ramon Penal Colony unless the Department of Justice ordered his transfer back to the New Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa City.

"It's up to the DOJ if he should be transferred to Bilibid. Our order was only to rearrest him," Razon told the INQUIRER by phone.

He said Jalosjos was taken to the penal colony because it was the "nearest" prison facility available.

And the prisoner may remain there on Christmas Day while the DOJ studies his case, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said.

Asked what was to prevent Jalosjos from leaving his detention cell and going home to his family, Gonzalez said it was incumbent on Zamboanga del Norte prison officials to see to it that the man stayed behind bars.

"I believe he'll still be there," Gonzalez said when asked if

'Nobody from NBP made a move to stop him'

By DJ Yap

ROMEO JALOSJOS WAS ABLE to leave the New Bilibid Prisons (NBP) reservation unhampered and unescorted by his jailers, his secretary said yesterday.

"Nobody from the NBP made a move to stop him. He left on his own because he believes he has already been discharged," said Susan Sespeñe.

By Sespeñe's account, Jalosjos left the NBP in Muntinlupa City at about 10:30 a.m. on Saturday on board his sports utility vehicle and accompanied by a close-in security aide. He got on a plane bound for Dipolog City in Zamboanga del Norte en route to Dapitan City at 11:30 a.m.

He spent Friday night in his nipa hut near the tennis court in the reservation, and even attended morning Mass before leaving for the airport.

Jalosjos would be in Zamboanga del Norte on Christmas Day. "We are [determining] when he will be returned [to the NBP]."

He said he wanted Jalosjos brought back to the national penitentiary because Zamboanga was close to the latter's hometown: "As a matter of fact, I want him to return to Manila."

'No one holding me'

Jalosjos insisted that based on his release order dated Dec. 16, he was a free man.

"In fact I was already overstaying inside, and they don't want to keep me longer," he said.

According to Jalosjos, on Dec. 17 he left the NBP to hear a Christmas dawn Mass ("simbang gab") with his family. He returned two days later to visit friends in prison.

Said the man: "No one was holding me. The guards even stopped me and stamped my wrist, and asked me to leave my cellular phone as it's not allowed to bring a unit inside. And they were treating me that way because I am no longer detained. They were doing that because I am a visitor."

"I believe he'll still be there," Gonzalez said when asked if

"He trusted that no one would stop him since he's already free," Sespeñe said. She disclaimed knowledge of whether her boss had told any prison official of his plan to leave for his hometown.

'Nothing happening'

Sespeñe said Jalosjos had decided to comply with a "request" by NBP head Supt. Juanito Leopando that he remain in the reservation until the investigation of his botched release was over.

"Since nothing was happening in the investigation, he decided to leave. He said earlier that he wanted to spend Christmas with his family," she said.

Jalosjos was convicted in 1997 of two counts of statutory rape and sentenced to two life terms. The victim was an 11-year-old girl.

In April, President Macapagal-Arroyo commuted his sentence to 16 years.

On Dec. 16, Jalosjos was given a release document and allowed to walk free. In the face of public uproar, Malacañang and the Department of Justice said his discharge was not final, and prison officials took him back into custody.

Privileges

As a "living-out" inmate in the minimum security compound since March 13, Jalosjos enjoyed certain privileges, such as moving around with no guards or escorts.

Apart from assigned tasks like cleaning, the only thing expected of living-out inmates is to show up for the roll calls at 4 a.m. and 5 p.m., Bureau of Corrections Director Ricardo Dapat said in an earlier interview.

As of October, about 900 inmates in the minimum security compound had living-out privileges, Dapat said.

He said those qualified to be living-out inmates were aged 60 or older, and who had only 6-10 months left in their sentence.

Repeated calls made yesterday by the INQUIRER to Dapat's mobile phone went unanswered.

NBP chaplain Fr. Robert Olaguer said in another earlier interview that another requirement for living-out inmates was that their residence should not be in Metro Manila, or they would be considered flight risks.

Jalosjos qualified for living-out status because his family is based in Zamboanga, Olaguer said.

Sespeñe said Jalosjos' lawyers led by Cipriano Robielos would meet to discuss their options.

She said the lawyers were considering filing for a writ of habeas corpus, but that nothing was final yet. With a report from Julie Aurelio

the Supreme Court [does]."

Reporters sought Caringal's reaction, but he excused himself, saying: "We are all tired and we cannot issue any statement at this moment."

'Beautiful Christmas'

Jalosjos was hopeful that he would spend "a beautiful Christmas" with his 80-year-old mother Angelina and the rest of his family.

"We are hoping it will not be a bleak Christmas. We are all praying for a 'White Christmas' for everyone," Angelina, who accompanied her son to Camp Batalla, said in Chavacano.

The mother said the family had not prepared anything for the special day "because we are all confused."

She aired an appeal to President Macapagal-Arroyo: "I hope you can do something about this. My son is free; please don't make it hard for him."

And she vowed not to leave her son, declaring: "I will stay wherever he is."

But Jalosjos and his seven lawyers do not have much time to ensure that he will spend

Christmas in Dapitan.

It is widely believed that the rape convict has been running the affairs of Dapitan through his brother, Mayor Dominador Jalosjos.

Gonzalez said he had learned from Jalosjos' family that the ex-lawmaker left the NBP only to visit his family during the holidays and was intending to return to the national penitentiary.

"He was assuming he could do it. That was his mistake," Gonzalez said.

But he observed that such a statement could have been made only as an "afterthought," after the rape convict's trip home was found out.

In Tanay

The justice secretary said Jalosjos' kin had requested that he be detained at the vacation house of deposed President Joseph Estrada in Tanay, Rizal.

However, he pointed out, he could not take cognizance of such a request because the vacation house was under the control of the Department of the Interior and Local Government.

Gonzalez said Jalosjos' departure from the NBP could cost him and prolong his imprisonment.

"What is clear here is that there was some kind of violation. As to how serious, I don't know. It's still under study," Gonzalez said.

He said the DOJ was determining whether to file charges, possibly evasion of service of sentence, against Jalosjos.

Should the man be found guilty of the charge, his release date might go beyond April 2009, the DOJ computation of his release after the President commuted his sentence.

"If he has a new case, it might prolong [his release]," Gonzalez said.

Evasion of service of sentence is punishable by imprisonment of up to six years.

Gonzalez had earlier said the DOJ computation of Jalosjos' release was different, and that Ms Arroyo wanted her policy of releasing inmates aged 70 and above to prevail.

Jalosjos turns 70 only in 2010. With reports from Nikko Dizon in Manila; Bert Laput and Richel V. Umel, Inquirer Mindanao

Palace caught flat-footed by Dapitan escapade

From page A1

"You can hear the displeasure in her voice," Ermita said when asked whether the latest incident involving Jalosjos, a political ally of the President, had angered her.

He said Malacañang did not know "how it happened" that Jalosjos was able to get to his native Dapitan City. "I was really surprised, Bakit ba ito nangyari?"

Gonzalez said Ms Arroyo had told him that he should handle the investigation of the matter because the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) fell under his jurisdiction.

Asked how the President received the information on Jalosjos' flight, Gonzalez said: "She must be disturbed."

Not a flight risk

Ermita said neither the BuCor nor the Department of Justice had authorized Jalosjos

travel to Dapitan.

But he quoted Gonzalez as saying that Jalosjos might have been able to leave the NBP because he was no longer considered a flight risk and thus had been enjoying "living out" privileges since the commutation of his sentence in April.

Asked whether Jalosjos would be charged for leaving prison without proper authority, Ermita said it was Gonzalez who was in a better position to answer that question.

But definitely, he said, the Palace could not authorize Jalosjos' release because the BuCor was under the DOJ.

Earlier, the President was reported to have been upset at learning that NBP officials ordered the release of Jalosjos, whom she believed to be eligible for release only when he turns 70 in 2010.

Ms Arroyo commuted to 16 years the two life terms im-

posed on Jalosjos for raping an 11-year-old girl.

Justice officials subsequently said that by their computation, the rape convict was eligible for release on April 2009, and not Dec. 16, which was the computation of then BuCor Director Vicente Vinario.

Quid pro quo

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. described the purported special treatment accorded Jalosjos as "political quid pro quo."

He said the President was willing to pay her dues even if it meant going against the public outrage over Jalosjos' release.

Pimentel said he doubted that Gonzalez would be able to carry out his threat to put Jalosjos back in jail.

"Let's see how far Raul, the Injustice Secretary, would pursue his threat to arrest the paroled. He probably can't do

anything about it anymore," Pimentel said in a text message to the INQUIRER.

Former Solicitor General Francisco Chavez also expressed doubt over the government's sincerity in keeping Jalosjos in jail, saying the latter's rearrest could be part of "one big zarzuela."

According to Chavez, Jalosjos' release earlier this month was recalled as a result of public outrage.

But when public interest waned, nobody seemed to be checking on Jalosjos' status anymore, Chavez said in a phone interview.

"It (The government) really wants to let him off the hook. His application was processed by the government. When nobody was looking, one flew over the cuckoo's nest," Chavez added, citing the title of a novel and subsequent movie about a hospital patient's flight from detention.

As for Jalosjos' rearrest after his flight, Chavez said it could be "all for show."

He said the prisoner was saying one thing, the justice secretary was saying another, and Malacañang did not appear to be aware of what's going on.

"It's part of a bag of tricks. Eventually, it will be forgotten by the people who don't care. When the public clamor has died down, who will follow up on Jalosjos' status? By that time, Jalosjos will be free," Chavez said.

He said he was "apprehensive" that Jalosjos could skip the country because no hold-departure order had been issued on the man.

Chavez contested Jalosjos' detention at the San Ramon Penal Colony in Zamboanga del Norte, saying the escaped felon should be brought back to the national penitentiary and detained there like other convicts.

"That would be a violation of the law," he said in reference to Jalosjos' detention at the Zamboanga prison. "A convicted criminal should be at the [NBP] in Muntinlupa."

Chavez said that since Jalosjos had shown not only a propensity for flight but had also actually escaped, he should be placed under maximum security detention at the NBP despite his status as a minimum security prisoner before his flight to Dapitan.

Asked to comment on the police statement that Jalosjos should stay in the Zamboanga prison because he was able to escape from the NBP, Chavez said the solution should be tighter security.

"He must be brought back to Bilibid and placed under heavy guard. That's the solution," he said. With reports from Leila B. Salaverria and Gil C. Cabangan Jr.

Pinoys bring 'Simbang Gabi' to Singapore

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.
Contributor

SINGAPORE—THEY MAY BE OUTSIDE the country, but many Filipinos in Singapore are making sure their celebration of Christmas still feels like home.

In the process, they have introduced some uniquely Filipino Christmas traditions to Singaporeans and other nationalities in the city state—the Simbang Gabi, a series of nine pre-dawn Catholic Masses; and the Philippine lantern or parol, which now adorns many Catholic churches here.

When the novena Masses were first introduced in Singapore in 1999, the Filipino language was used, since only Filipinos were attending the Masses, said Catholic priest Angel Luciano, who is also a Filipino.

But Father Angel, as he is known to his parishioners, said he eventually shifted to using English during the Mass because more and more foreigners began attending.

The number of churchgoers trying to complete the nine novena Masses has grown. For the second Mass this year, close to a thousand churchgoers showed up at the Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, said Father Angel.

"The turnout was simply overwhelming," he said.

Church volunteers and priests of other nationalities have also joined the novena Masses. Last year, a parish priest of the Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, who is Vietnamese, concelebrated the Masses, said Father Angel.

Simbang Gabi, Singapore-style, is held at 8 p.m. and each Mass is held in a different church.

There are about 120,000 Filipinos in Singapore, 80,000 of them domestic workers.

Looking for the churches is easy and fun, one churchgoer told Father Angel in a re-



GIVE LOVE. Children of migrant Filipino families sing "Give Love on Christmas Day" on the first day of Simbang Gabi on Dec. 15 at the Church of St. Anthony in Woodlands. They are called the Posap Kids (for Pinoy Oblates of St. Anthony de Padua, organized in 2001).

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

cent email.

She said she and her elder brother, who were joining the Simbang Gabi in Singapore for the first time last year, simply went to the nearest bus station.

How did they know which of the buses to take? She said the technique was to look for the bus "with the longest, and usually the noisiest, line of Filipinos."

"We never got lost in looking for the churches," she said in her e-mail.

Having to visit different churches also gives the experience a deeper meaning, she added.

Host parishes cook free food for the churchgoers. Gifts are distributed to children. Members of the community also take turns decorating the parish with lanterns, a symbol for Filipinos that Christmas is just

around the corner.

Father Angel receives numerous e-mails from churchgoers expressing gratitude for being able to experience a truly Filipino Christmas even if they are miles away from home.

One e-mail writer said it was the first time he had actually completed the nine Masses, and he has done it outside the Philippines.

Other lanterns mentioned the joy of visiting different churches in Singapore, which combines sightseeing with the fervor of the Visita Iglesia, yet another folk-religious tradition that sees thousands of Filipinos on pilgrimage to several churches during Holy Week.

Last year, a priest of another parish expressed happiness about being part of the

Simbang Gabi experience.

Father Angel said the parish priest "congratulated the Filipinos for filling the churches of Singapore and the world with their presence."

It is therefore not surprising that each of the parishes they visit for the novena Masses is always teeming with churchgoers, Father Angel said. The world has started to know Filipinos not only for their skills and diligence, but also for their deep faith and unique Christmas traditions.

'Loneliest' Christmas away from home

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THIS WILL PROBABLY BE HER "LONELIEST" Christmas.

Software company writer Jeanne Cang, 25, is celebrating her first Christmas away from her family. She got a job here only two months ago and while she said it would be interesting to observe how other cultures celebrate the season, she said she would miss her family a lot.

Her uncle has just transferred in Singapore and her sister is coming over to be with her, but she says she will really miss the "festive atmosphere" of celebrations in the Philippines.

There are elaborate decors on Orchard Road, a street here teeming with shopping malls, yet Cang says the feeling is just different.

She says she will miss family get-togethers, the food, and yes, even kids singing Christmas carols.

Perhaps it is because she has just gotten in this small country, and the homesickness sets in. But it is a feeling Patricia Mondonedo shares, even if she has been away from her family for eight years.

Working here as a community services

manager, Mondonedo, who is older than 30, says she will miss noisy celebrations in the Philippines.

Mondonedo has never spent Christmas in Singapore. "I never celebrate Christmas in Singapore. It gets very lonely," she says.

Unlike the Philippines, Singapore is not a predominantly Catholic country. Mondonedo says Chinese New Year is usually the bigger holiday celebration in Singapore.

This year, she will be spending Christmas in South Korea with some of her friends, yet she will miss "waiting for midnight to open gifts and being with four generations of our family."

She says she misses seeing "adults in the family get drunk, while some of the children are trying to get sips of wine."

Of course, she will miss all the dancing and singing, a common sight in celebrations in homes in the Philippines.

THE DAILY GOSPEL



Monday, December 24, 2007

4th Week of Advent

25:7:1-5, 8-12, 14, 16
Luke 1:67-79

1st Reading:

Gospel:

Zechariah, filled with holy spirit, sang this canticle, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has come and redeemed his people. He has raised up for us a victorious Savior in the house of David his servant, as he promised through his prophets of old, salvation from our enemies and from the hand of our foes."

He has shown mercy to our fathers and remembered his holy covenant, the oath he swore to Abraham, our father, to deliver us from the enemy, that we might serve him fearlessly as a holy and righteous people all the days of our lives.

And you, my child, shall be called prophet of the Most High, for you shall go before the Lord to prepare the way for him and enable his people to know of their salvation when he comes to forgive their sins. This is the work of the mercy of our God, who comes from on high as a rising sun shining on those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, and guiding our feet into the way of peace."

Commentary

David has settled in his palace and thinks of building God a palace of his own. The prophet Nathan tells him to go ahead. But God declares that he himself will build his own dwelling place among humankind. It is God that has done everything in David's life and will give a house that will endure forever, through wars/enemies and all history. It is God who has given us everything from the beginning and given Joseph and Mary everything, including the child to be born. This is God's new house among those he has created as his own. God fulfills his promises and keeps his word. This is what he is doing! It is time to praise God, with Zechariah and Elizabeth, because our God has ransomed us, visited us, remembered us, and dealt mercifully with us. We should serve him devoutly and be holy in his sight. All is the work of our God who brings the Dayspring, out of the darkness so that our feet will be guided into the way of peace. Soon, Peace will come to us.

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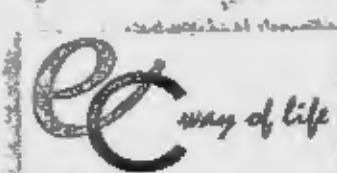


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- Close gas tank caps tightly to avoid fuel evaporation and spillage.
- Avoid traffic jams; take alternate routes.
- Avoid jack-rabbit starts and speeding. Twenty-five percent fuel savings can be realized in driving at reduced speed from 120 to 80 kilometers per hour.
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- Keep tires properly inflated; 5-10%
- savings can be achieved.
- Reduce aircon usage especially in cool weather.
- Do not overload the vehicle. Additional load on vehicle will increase fuel consumption especially in driving uphill.
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Scientist explains 'Star in East'

From page A1

junction of Mars, Jupiter and Saturn in 7 B.C.

US databases

The advantage that a modern astrophysicist like Mathews has over Kepler and others who have pondered the question is that he has access to the databases of the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

"In principle, we can see any star that was ever made from the beginning of time if we knew where to look. So the question is, could we find a star that could be a good candidate for what showed up then?" Mathews says.

Mathews has found several possibilities. He begins by posing three questions when he tries to find the answer to any astronomical event: When did it occur? What were its characteristics? Did anyone else see it?

The Gospel of Matthew indicates Jesus was born in Bethlehem when Herod was king. Roman historian Flavius Josephus wrote that Herod died after an eclipse of the moon before the Passover.

According to Mathews, there are four possibilities—6 B.C., 5 B.C., 1 B.C. or 1 A.D.—when the Christmas star occurred. He says the star could have appeared up to two years before the wise men

arrived in Jerusalem.

Mathews believes that means the Christmas star could have appeared anywhere from 8 to 4 B.C.—fitting in with some scholars' views on when Jesus was born.

Star's characteristics

Among the characteristics written about the Christmas star was that it appeared before sunrise and that it appeared to "rest in the sky." Mathews has found writings from Korean and Chinese astronomers of an event about 4 B.C. which described a comet with no tail that didn't move.

Using that set of facts, Mathews has come up with several possibilities, including supernovas, novas and planetary alignments.

Mathews has found two possible supernovas in the right period, but says one was probably too low on the horizon to be seen. The other supernova is known as Kes 75. But it was 60,000 light years away and may not have been particularly spectacular.

"There's no real convincing evidence this happened right at 2000 years ago, but it could be in the range of being right because it's in the right location," he says.

Mathews has also found a number of novas that also could have been the Christmas star. The one he thinks is the most likely candidate is



MATHEWS

known as Nova Aquilae V603.

The problem with novas and comets, though, is that they were believed in ancient times to be a sign of disaster, not a portent of good things to come.

Time of alignment

For that reason, Mathews believes the Christmas star was most likely an alignment of planets. He said there are three likely times for this:

- Feb. 20, 6 B.C. when Mars, Jupiter and Saturn aligned in the constellation Pisces.
- April 17, 6 B.C. when the sun, Jupiter, the moon and Saturn aligned in the constellation Aries while Venus and Mars were in neighboring constellations.
- June 17, 2 B.C. when

Jupiter and Venus were closely aligned in Leo.

Mathews believes the April 17, 6 B.C., alignment is the most likely candidate. It makes sense because he believes the wise men were Zoroastrian astrologers who would have recognized the planetary alignment in Aries as a sign a powerful leader was born.

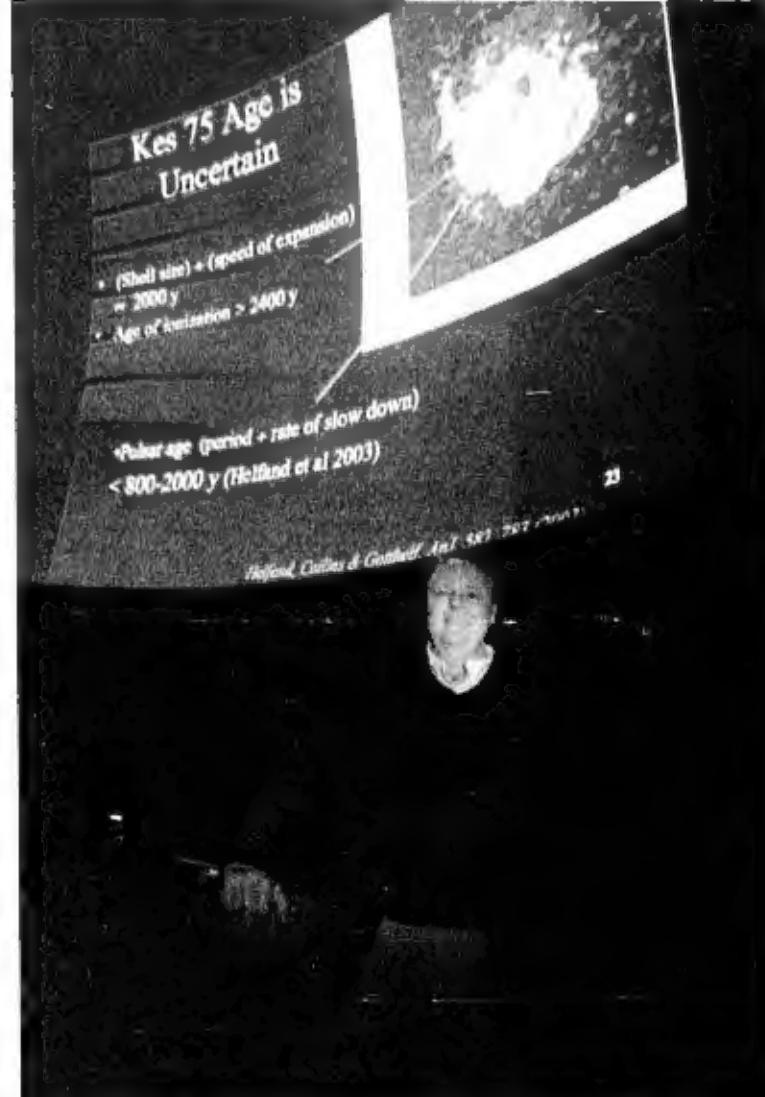
"In fact it would have even meant that (the leader was) destined to die at an appointed time, which of course would have been significant for the Christ child, and may have been why they brought myrrh, which was an embalming fluid," Mathews says.

Saturn's influence

"Saturn there would have made whoever was born as a leader a most powerful leader because Saturn had the strength to do it, in their view," Mathews says.

The astrophysicist has been sharing his findings in lectures at Notre Dame—the Catholic university here in South Bend, about 150 kilometers east of Chicago—and plans to write a paper to submit to the Quarterly Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society. He's also considering writing a book.

Mathews concedes, though, that any of the other events could have been the famed star of Bethlehem.



THE ASTROPHYSICIST stands in front of one of his slides at the Jordan Hall of Science at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana. He gave a presentation that offers possible explanations of events in astronomy about the Christmas star.

"I think it would take more of a historical reference more than an astrophysics," Mathews says. "There are plenty of strong opinions out there. I think this is as good as you can do for now."

AP

Prospects dismal GMA popularity will improve

From page A1

reopening next year of congressional investigations into a number of corruption scandals on administration economic development projects.

Satisfaction rating

The prospects of the administration turning the corner on Ms Arroyo's persistent rock-bottom public satisfaction rating are dim.

A survey conducted by Social Weather Stations from Nov. 30 to Dec. 3 showed that 48 percent of respondents were dissatisfied and 32 percent were satisfied with Ms Arroyo's performance, despite the grant of pardon to former President Estrada after he had been convicted of plunder.

The survey found that one out of two Filipinos approved

of Ms Arroyo's decision to pardon Estrada, but this did not improve her satisfaction rating overall.

SWS pointed out that the President did not gain from the pardon "because those who agreed with it were even more dissatisfied." This suggested that the impact of the pardon in helping her recover her disapproval rating was fleeting.

The other survey by Pulse Asia in October showed 42 percent of Filipinos perceived Ms Arroyo as the "most corrupt President in Philippine history," followed by Marcos, 35 percent, and Estrada 16 percent.

Paradox

Cold comfort for Ms Arroyo, in political terms, although she is perceived by Filipinos as "the most cor-

rupt" President, the survey found they were not outraged enough to take drastic steps to remove her forcefully from office. This is the paradox that stands out in the Pulse Asia survey.

When Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim and Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV staged on Oct. 29 the 14th coup attempt since the EDSA I rising in February 1986, the public mood of revulsion at the perceived corruption of the Arroyo administration that had been captured by the survey did not translate into mass political action to topple her.

And yet, the same survey found that three in five Filipinos (59 percent) thought a President should resign from office if the President "tolerates corruption among government officials or is linked

directly or indirectly to graft and corruption."

Related to this result is the finding that most Filipinos "are not inclined to take drastic measures" to remove the President from office "even if they are convinced" that the President should resign or be removed from office.

Ambivalent public

More revealing, especially to coup plotters, is the finding that only 24 percent of Filipinos expressed willingness "to do whatever is necessary (beyond public rallies and marches)," which is understood to mean to include coups. This suggests that it takes more than revulsion at corruption to trigger public risings of the scale that deposed Marcos in February 1986 (EDSA I) and Estrada in

January 2001 (EDSA II).

This ambivalence helps explain why the Lim-Trillanes coup attempt at Manila Peninsula Hotel didn't catch fire in mobilizing wide public support and collapsed in a whimper.

The failure to read correctly the public mood to support coup attempts is at the bottom of the collapse of most previous coup attempts, except the rising of People Power I and of People Power II.

The Trillanes coup attempt at Oakwood in 2003 was badly planned and ill-executed. The second coup attempt at Manila Pen was even worse.

Unlike the EDSA I rebellion by former Defense Secretary Juan Ponce Enrile and Gen. Fidel Ramos in February 1986 against the Marcos dictatorship, they raised an armed

force and decided to die and make a stand at Camp Aguinaldo, and later at Camp Crame.

People power was unknown then. They did not expect civilians to mass in the streets to defend them. The people power was in response to a call by then Manila Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin. The civilian intervention was not part of the Ramos-Enrile calculation.

Miscalculation

The civilian mass turned back the Marcos tanks moving toward Crame. Marcos' commanders refused to fire at the civilian human wave and Marcos feared he would go down in history as the butcher of the people.

Trillanes and Lim did not only have an armed force except a puny contingent. They miscalculated people would rush to the streets to support their mutiny at Oakwood and also at Manila Pen as they declared withdrawal of support for the Arroyo administration.

Except for EDSA I and at EDSA II, people never went out to the streets to force out of office a government. They neither rushed to the streets to defend the Aquino administration nor responded to the calls of renegade Col. Gregorio Honasan in his coup attempts.

The miscalculations and romantic assumptions of Trillanes and Lim on people power were not only responsible for the collapse of their coup attempt. These also benefited the Arroyo regime.

The outlook for 2008 is bad for an ill-conceived and ill-timed coup attempt. The outlook for the recovery of Ms Arroyo's disapproval rating is equally dismal. Exogenous economic developments and disturbances are a threat to her economic performance.

Outside,
the nightly traffic
roars and rumbles.
A dog barks at the cat
he will never catch.
A neighbor yells for
her son to come home.

You open a bottle
of Novellino.

Suddenly,
your place becomes
the most romantic
of settings.

Novellino
One sip and love begins

Young RP singing star shines abroad

From page A1

perform on the syndicated talk program, the Filipino teener had already recorded a seven-track digital album in Sweden.

Pempengco, the third placer on ABS-CBN's singing talent search program "Little Big Star" in 2005, had also appeared as a guest performer on "Star King," the reality show's Korean counterpart that airs on Seoul Broadcasting System (SBS).

In July, Pempengco inked a digital recording deal with the Swedish label Ten Song Productions. Among the songs she recorded were "Running Up That Hill," "Stay," her winning piece (on "Little Big Star"), "I Will Always Love You," and originals "Amazing," "All The Money In The World," "It Can Only Get Better" and "Born To Love You Forever."

Digital records are distributed through the transfer of files via the Internet directly to a personal computer.

"Because this was the case, we are now looking for a major record label to take



PEMPENGCO

charge of the album's physical distribution," said Annabelle Regalado-Borja, managing director of Star Records Artists Management (Stram).

Two videos of Pempengco singing "I Will Always Love You" attracted the attention of Ten Songs Productions' Adis Adamson. The first video features Pempengco—a wild-card

contender—performing the song popularized by Whitney Houston at the 2005 tilt's grand finals.

988,972 hits

The second video, titled "Face-off," shows a clip of Pempengco's "I Will Always Love You" performance side by side with the clip of "America's Got Talent" finalist Bianca Ryan performing "And I Am Telling You I'm Not Going."

To date, the "Face-off" video has registered a total of 988,972 hits.

In October, Pempengco received an invitation from SBS, arguably one of the biggest Korean television networks, to perform on "Star King." This was after another video—with Pempengco singing "And I Am Telling You," from the "Dreamgirls" movie soundtrack—was viewed on YouTube.

A star is born

Pempengco's "Star King" performance, as recorded on YouTube, found its way into American television when it was featured on "E! The Daily

Ten" on Nov 14 with the headline, "A Star Is Born."

Two days later, Pempengco was featured in the E! show's "Hollywood Royalty" segment.

On Nov. 28, viewers from all over the world witnessed DeGeneres personally inviting Pempengco to appear on her show.

The award-winning Ellen DeGeneres show is an hourlong daytime talk show hosted by the American stand-up comedian and television icon. It has won over 20 Daytime Emmy Awards since its inception in 2003.

Reduced to tears

Less than a month later, on Dec. 19, Pempengco was on "Ellen," singing her two signature show-stoppers. The audience gave her a standing ovation. She herself was in tears as the program host hugged her.

"The performances brought tears to Ellen's eyes, too" Borja said.

DeGeneres gifted the young singer with an iPod Touch—Pempengco had lost hers en route to the studio in Burbank, California.

DeGeneres and Pempengco had shared a touching moment backstage.

Importance of humility

Said Borja: "While on the way to their respective dressing rooms, Ellen told Charice: 'You have a great talent. You have to take care of it. You must remain humble. Be careful of the people who will be interested in you. Trust yourself and follow your heart.'

Borja, who was with the singer at the time, said DeGeneres' words touched Pempengco. "She kept saying she couldn't believe it was happening to her."

Now, Pempengco is on her way to revisit Korea and perform on "Star King" again.

Upon her return to Manila, she is set to work on her solo album under Star Records, Borja said, and will have a shot at recording the theme song of ABS-CBN's new drama series, "Habang May Buhay."

Gordon-Garcia tandem floated for 2010 polls

From page A1

Gordon, the loquacious former mayor of Olongapo City, visited Cebu on Dec. 15 as guest speaker during the launching of the Wonderful Star roll-on, roll-off vessel owned by Roble Shipping in what some quarters saw as a launching of his presidential bid and probable running mate.

The administration has no definite candidates yet who may succeed Ms Arroyo, whose term ends in less than three years.

'GG' partnership

In a statement released by Gordon's office, Garcia, in her speech, praised the senator for "his sincerity, his passion, his competence that marks him as truly one deserving to lead our country."

She cited Gordon as a "presidentialiable" and spoke of a "GG" partnership which, she said, stood for "Good Governance—Gordon and Gwen."

"We have our responsibility to our country. And as Cebu now leads all other provinces, and as Cebu is now showing everyone else that indeed it can be done with 'GG'—Good Governance—Gordon and Gwen," said Garcia.

The governor also revealed that she had been a fan of Gordon's forceful public speeches.

"Way back, when Gordon was still mayor of Olongapo, whenever I will get a chance to listen to him on television, I will forget everything else because just listening to him truly inspires us to work and go to great lengths for the good of our country," she said.

In response, Gordon said "GG" could stand for "Gwen Garcia or Gordon-Garcia or Gwen-Gordon or what anyone could call Good Governance."

Dynamic Cebu

The senator said Garcia herself had been wooed by potential presidential candidates as a running mate, largely because of how she had transformed Cebu into a dynamic province.

The Garcia family has been credited for delivering to the President the decisive votes in her reelection in 2004 in a landslide victory in Cebu.

Gordon said the province could be the model of economic progress for the entire Philippines as he compared its entrepreneurial drive to the spirit of Lapu-Lapu who successfully repulsed the first venture of Spanish conquest of the Philippines."

The pairing conforms to the tradition of selecting candidates for president and vice president from either Luzon or Visayas-Mindanao in order to cover a broader voting mass.

Although both politicians are off the radar insofar as the top presidential and vice presidential candidates are concerned, pundits believe that having four or five bets fighting for one post can give the edge to candidates backed by the administration since 25 percent of the votes is enough to win it all.

The administration is currently playing catch-up in the preparation for the 2010 elections.

Opposition candidates, mostly from the Senate, have dominated the popularity polls. They include Senate President Manny Villar, Senators Manuel Roxas II, Panfilo Lacson and Loren Legarda.



OPINION

Text us your feedback: Inquirer opn name/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

THE PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER, INC. has its business and editorial offices at:
 •Chino Roces Ave corner Yague and Maredo Sts., Makati City
 •P.O. Box 2153 Makati Central Post Office (243 Makati City)
 •Our telephone numbers are 897-8828 connecting all departments
 •Editorial Fax: 897-4792 / 897-4794 • Advertising 897-4807
 •Circulation 523-5570
 •Subscription Hotline 896-6888
 •100% tax-exempt



Source of hope

THE GREAT RELIGIONS SHARE A COMMON REGARD for the pilgrim. Indeed, the very idea of pilgrimage is central to many of them. By this we mean, not only the cleansing journey to a religious destination that the devout undertake, but life on earth as itself a pilgrim's journey. That would make all of us transients, travelers just passing through.

For those who share in the consolations of faith, the temporariness of life is not an omen of despair but a sign of hope. More than a sign, it is a condition.

In the Christian view, true hope comes from outside time. Pope Benedict XVI, in his second encyclical "Spe Salvi," reminds us of two lessons of history. First, modern man learned to define hope as "faith in progress." Second, that hope has been repeatedly frustrated, by man's own ambiguous, indeed ambivalent, nature. The work of science, to give one example, can be used for either good or evil. The advance in economic management, to give another, fosters a materialistic view of human development, to the detriment of the spiritual.

In the Christian view, therefore, the hope that springs eternal has its true source outside of human experience. But this source is not only outside of time; it is also, essentially, specifically, time-bound. The birth of the Messiah the Christian world celebrates beginning tonight is an actual fact; in the Christian view, the incarnation is God inserting himself into history.

The vigorous Catholicism of writers like G. K. Chesterton and our own Horacio de la Costa taught many to see (and to welcome) the upside-down quality in the Christian faith: It is a religion of reversal, where the last shall be first and the poor inherit the earth. And where the object of pilgrimage becomes a pilgrim himself, a fellow transient. He is one of us; He is God-with-us.

This undeserved oneness is the true source of Christian hope.

Sources of hope

ATURBULENT YEAR IS RUSHING TO AN END. THIS month's extended holidays give us an occasion to reflect on the turbulence.

Much of the turmoil was, and remains, political. The mid-term elections drew high public interest and drove a high voter turnout, but it also deepened political divisions. One public scandal after another outraged the public and at the same time confirmed it in its disaffection. The political killings continued to fester, like a cancer that has metastasized out of control. The growing unpopularity of President Macapagal-Arroyo and the small-mindedness and short-termism of much of the political opposition have sharpened the legitimacy issue, turning it into a two-edged sword. And so on, ad nauseam.

But 2007 was also, and eminently, a year of hope. Indeed, INQUIRER editors voting for Filipino of the Year have to choose from the most inspiring lineup of choices in years.

The decision of the Sandiganbayan special division convicting deposed President Joseph Estrada of plunder showed a remarkable consistency of purpose and lucidity of thought. The mid-term elections showed continuing maturity among Filipino voters. Isabela Gov. Grace Padaca was reelected, celebrity senatorial candidates who ran only on their fame were resoundingly trounced, and priest-on-leave Among Ed Panilio won the governorship of Pampanga over two traditional politicians, in dramatic fashion.

The Supreme Court, under the leadership of its new Chief Justice, Reynato Puno, convened an extraordinary summit to confront the grim specter of political killings that continues to haunt the countryside. In October, it promulgated a new legal remedy, the writ of amparo, which offered hope to those whose loved ones were victims of forced disappearances. Edita Burgos, whose unceasing and uncompromising search for her son Jonas, believed to be abducted by rogue military agents, provided the nation with a stirring profile in courage. And journalists everywhere, intent only on doing their job, pushed back when administration hard-liners mounted fresh assaults on press freedom.

These Filipinos, like many others toiling in obscurity, did what needed to be done. In the process, they offer hope for everyone.

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Give gifts to rescued animals through PAWS

A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO EVERYBODY, INCLUDING President Macapagal-Arroyo. May the light of reason and justice shine upon her.

Convicted child rapist Romeo Jalosjos has just made a laughing stock of the President, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, the New(?) Bilibid Prisons, and our justice system as a whole. (I did not include officials of Bilibid because Jalosjos could not have left the premises of the penitentiary without the consent of these officials. The best that can be said of them is that they are stupendously incompetent.)

How can a high-profile prisoner sentenced to two life terms like Jalosjos, whom no less than the President has ordered to be kept in prison, and whose whereabouts Gonzalez supposedly monitored, leave the prison, fly to Dapitan in Zamboanga del Norte in a private plane accompanied by bodyguards, without the prison officials and guards knowing about it? He has made a mockery of the orders of the President and Gonzalez, and has shown that our justice system is full of holes. It proves the rumors that privileged prisoners at Munti go and come at will, that prisoners can go out on murder missions and return to prison at night to give them an alibi.

Even before Jalosjos' flight, Gonzalez said he has already scolded the prisons director, Ricardo Dapat, for being so lax. Obviously a mere scolding is not enough. Dapat figura Dapat should be meted out a more serious punishment, such as dismissal.

I mean, with all the brouhaha around Jalosjos, the order from Malacañang to keep him in prison, and Jalosjos' arrogant and intransigent attitude in insisting that he is no longer a prisoner, prison officials should have been more alert and strict. But he just walked out of prison without anybody noticing him. Can our prison guards be trusted to even keep pigs in a pen?

Anyway, Jalosjos' excuse in flying to his home turf is that he has been "released" for "good behavior." What good behavior? Is what he just did good behavior?

It is Christmas Eve and if you still haven't bought gifts for friends, there is an easier way than to brave the crush and pickpockets at Divisoria and the malls. Send gifts to your friends through the Philippine Animal Welfare Society (PAWS).

Here's how to do it: Donate to PAWS in the name of your friends. PAWS will take care of sending the cards announcing that you have do-

As I See It



Neal H. Cruz

What Jalosjos has done is show that he does not deserve executive clemency. The President should withdraw it. If she has the power to give clemency, she also has the power not to, and to withdraw what she has erroneously given.

Gonzalez said he has ordered the arrest of Jalosjos, but then softened it by saying that he understands that the prisoner just "wants to spend some time with his family." What? So now any prisoner who wants to spend some time with his family can walk out of prison anytime and go home?

The latest word is that Jalosjos, when arrested, will not be taken back to Munti but confined in a Zamboanga jail. That's like throwing a turtle into the river.

So now Jalosjos can throw a party in jail and invite his supporters and they can explode fireworks and make merry and it would be just like old times. Happy days are here again! That's the surest way to encourage other prisoners to also escape.

What Jalosjos deserves is the bartolina, just like other escaped prisoners when recaptured. And he should be meted out an additional jail term just like other escapees. No favoritism please. Can the GMA administration live this down?

It is Christmas Eve and if you still haven't bought gifts for friends, there is an easier way than to brave the crush and pickpockets at Divisoria and the malls. Send gifts to your friends through the Philippine Animal Welfare Society (PAWS).

Here's how to do it: Donate to PAWS in the name of your friends. PAWS will take care of sending the cards announcing that you have do-

nated a certain amount in their names as gifts and thanking them and you for your thoughtfulness and kindness. Easy, di ba? No hassle, no pickpockets, no traffic. PAWS' telephone number is 4827695. Donations by corporations to PAWS, by the way, is tax-deductible.

Your donation will be used to feed and take care of abandoned animals rescued by PAWS and kept in their rescue centers. These poor animals are rehabilitated and trained to be good family pets and offered for adoption to responsible families.

If you want a dog or a cat for pets, don't buy puppies or kittens from breeders. They are not only expensive but also encourage breeders to mass produce them for profit. Look first at the pets offered for adoption by PAWS.

When you get a puppy or a kitten, you don't know how they will look like and behave when they grow up. But when you adopt adult dogs and cats, you can already see how they look like and behave. What you see is what you get. Also they are guaranteed to be healthy and have been trained to be good family pets. PAWS will not allow an animal to be adopted if it has not been properly trained even if you want it.

Kapitan Notes: There will be no Kapitan sa Manila (Hotel) and Plaridel lunch today, Christmas Eve, and next Monday, New Year's Eve. The next Kapitan and lunch will be on Jan. 7, 2008.

TODAY'S JOKES: There will be no nativity scene this Christmas in Congress. They can't find three wise men and a virgin from among its members. But there are enough asses to fill the stable. The House has offered other animals as well, like crocodiles, snakes and vultures.

From a Christmas homily for congressmen: Hold on to faith, it makes things possible.

Hold on to hope; it enables us to be positive.

Hold on to love; it gives meaning to life.

Hold on to GMA; she gives money at the Palace.

Yo ho ho



THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

discs. There's some visual degradation, particularly where the movie is long, but the material itself is, to say the least, remarkably watchable.

I know I'll get into an argument with defenders of GATT-decreed intellectual property rights with this again, but I don't mind. I'll debate the point some other day. I'll just push on gleefully meanwhile.

What makes the new "stash" a veritable treasure trove is not just the heightened quality of the discs, it is also the eye-popping range of its titles. These are not just Hollywood movies, these are movies from all over the world. And these are not just action and romance variety of movies, some of them are veritable classics, including movies gathered under the Criterion Collection. Most of these you will not find in the video outlets in the malls even if you wanted to buy the original. Much of what's sold in the malls are popular Hollywood movies of recent vintage, with a sprinkling of old-time Hollywood favorites.

You'll still find the usual stuff that sells for a song but is just as throwaway as one, the kind that reminds you of the early Betamax tapes where the characters sound as though they are talking underwater. Or where the subtitles read like the manual in a made-in-China appliance, which I suspect is expressly written to torture the English grammarian. That is especially true of more recent Hollywood movies. If you have a *sukh* in those lars, he or she will readily apprise you of the fact—"Hindi pa 'yan DVD, sir"—but will often insist it is a "clear copy." It is in fact neither one nor the other, but you'll be well advised to steer clear of debating the concept of "clear" with a vendor talking with the strong accents of the South.

You'll still find that stuff, but you will find something else, and that is the real treasure trove. I don't know where they're coming from, but they now have discs that are startlingly clear. I suspect they were copied from the original DVDs but compressed to fit single-layer

World War II; Lindsay Anderson's "if," a classic of my generation along with "Blow Up" (the latter I've had for a long time); Kon Ichikawa's "The Burmese Harp"; Gillo Pontecorvo's "The Battle of Algiers."

The last I was delighted to find, having been looking for it for some time (I have "Burn" and "Z," and the "The Barde of Algiers" completes the three favorite movies of my activist days). I watched it again and saw how well it had aged, so much of it—a war of liberation that resorted to bombing and assassination—still finds echoes in today's news. I was looking for Iranian movies but found none among the new crop. I do have Abbas Kiarostami's "10" and "The Wind Will Carry Us," but they were from long ago. While at this, you have to wonder how we, who have had several decades of moviemaking behind us and enjoy various freedoms compared to Iran and Afghanistan, have fallen behind them (among other countries) in making big-time waves cinema-wise. As Abbas shows, you don't need an awesome budget to make world-class movies, you need only an awesome imagination.

Frankly, with these kinds of movies, I don't greatly mind that Edu and/or Bong make life miserable for those who would like only to see the latest commercial movies. If only to compel us to see a world beyond Hollywood and the United States. If only to drive us to discover the awesome, mysterious and magical world of European, Latin American, Arab and Asian cinema. There's a vast, uncharted (by us) territory out there waiting to be discovered—no, demanding to be discovered. And courtesy of the Chinese/Maranao descendants of Francis Drake, or indeed the Chinese/Maranao descendants of the pre-1776 proto-Americans who freely copied and distributed British books to educate the burgeoning colonial population, you can get there as a tourist on a cheap, no-frills, budget.

Some people prefer to hear, "Ho, ho, ho," and a cascade of gifts. Others prefer to hear "Yo ho ho," and a bottle of rum.

The rum is optional.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2007

OPINION

Rule of law, not rule of money

SOUNDING BOARD

Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J.

IT IS A SAD DAY FOR THE COUNTRY WHEN THE president of a responsible big business organization like the Federation of Philippine Industries fails to see that what fueled whatever emotion has been poured into the Sumilao controversy was the disregard of the law. Yes, big business has the money to do what it wants to do—but it should be only within the parameters of the law. I certainly hope that Jesus Arranza does not speak for the entire membership of the federation. If he does, the rule of law in the Philippines is in real trouble.

The executive order issued by President Macapagal-Arroyo reversing the conversion order on the Sumilao property from being a signal that the rule of law will not be followed (as claimed by Mr. Arranza of the federation) is in fact a signal that business, no matter how big, is not above the law. An honest reading of the EO should show how in fact it is all about letting the law take its course. This is, after all, what fair thinking big business wants.

Recall that under the Agrarian Reform Law the farmers had been granted Certificates of Land Ownership (CLOAs) which were registered in the Register of Deeds. But big business, under a promise of an ambitious development of the land, petitioned that the land be converted instead to agro-industrial uses. The farmers opposed the petition all the way to the Supreme Court. The farmers lost. The CLOA which had been granted to them was taken back.

Helpless, the farmers waited in the expectation that they might after all benefit from the conversion order. In the end, however, the farmers realized that they had been had.

The Department of Agrarian Reform, hoping to insure that conversion petitions would not turn out simply as a subterfuge for foiling land reform, had imposed a condition on the triumphant business enterprise that it should complete conversion within five years or lose the conversion right.

If the Supreme Court had been more broad-

minded then and had allowed the extension of the period of appeal, as in fact Justice Reynato Puno (now Chief Justice) and Justice Jose Melo wanted to, perhaps we would not be having today's Sumilao controversy.

But that is water under the bridge. We are now where we are.

The President has declared that the Sumilao property is covered under land reform. She has the power to do so. The declaration, however, is not a fairy's magic wand. Before the farmers can truly win what they have been fighting for, there still are obstacles to be hurdled. In this contest, the farmers need a champion. Who can help them?

We should not underestimate what the President can do. The DAR is under her control and the powers of the DAR are really her powers. She can speed up the process, all within the law, even if the DAR secretary again chooses to delay.

Who can oppose the farmers? Big business, if it chooses to, can prolong the agony of the farmers. The DAR estimates about a year before everything is completed. But if big business chooses to prolong the legal battle and wage it all the way to the Supreme Court, it will be a long wait for the farmers.

And it will be David against Goliath. Goliath will not come out smelling roses.

In this season of hope, however, it is not impossible for big business, specifically San Miguel Foods, to cooperate in letting the real rule of law prevail and perhaps help in forging a voluntary win-win solution. I am convinced that most of big business also have the welfare of the underprivileged at heart. I can read as much in what Mr. Ramon Ang of San Miguel has said. But the welfare of the underprivileged need not be achieved the big business way. Let the little people decide what is best for themselves and for their dignity as human beings—especially since they have the law on their side!

More than five years ago, President Fidel V. Ramos tried to modify the conversion order he had approved and proposed instead what was then called a "win-win" solution. Under this solution, Ramos authorized the conversion of 44 hectares to agro-industrial use and 100 hectares for agricultural use by farmers. But big business opposed Ramos and the Supreme Court, on technical grounds, did not allow Ramos to change his mind.

If the Supreme Court had been more broad-

A Christmas message

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Noralyne Mustafa

THIS PIECE WAS INSPIRED BY THE CHRISTMAS message of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo that I caught on ANC Friday night. True to the tradition of her speeches and pronouncements these past years, it is admittedly a classic.

So in this season of kindness and goodwill! I thought it would be best to share with you something I did not write myself (honestly, there are so many times that I myself can't tell where my writing goes, and in this season of kindness and goodwill...) which I am passing on especially to all leaders and politicians who are men and women of goodwill. It is, I believe, an excellent Christmas message to end a politically turbulent year.

This is an excerpt from a manuscript written presumably between 1360 and 1350 B.C., and how it got down to us is an awesome story in itself. Chinese scholars attributed its authorship to Confucius, others to Lao Tze or Lao Kun of the Tao sect, while still others concluded that it was written by Bramin Damdami. But modern research, especially those borne out by archaeological excavations in Egypt and Jerusalem "within the past hundred years" (from the time perspective of 1925, when the book was first published), and certain references in the work itself show that it could not have been written by "anyone of their time, or nation or beliefs," according to the preface of the book.

The more logical conclusion, it appears, is that it was written by Amenhotep IV, Pharaoh of Egypt, or by some of his successors in the "great school of mysticism" that he founded. Amenhotep rejected the priesthood teachings and idol worship of Egypt and established a monotheistic, mystical religion. In the history of religions, he is cited as the first man in the civilized world to proclaim belief in one God, and he has been called "the greatest modernist of all times."

The original from which the English translation was eventually made was written in the Tibetan language and, according to the Grand Lama and his associates at the temple at Lhasa, the manuscript has been in their possession since 732 A.D.

In 1747 the emperor of China sent a scholar of antiquities to the Grand Lama seeking permission

to study ancient scrolls in the temple library. The emissary translated this particular manuscript into Chinese and in 1749 an English scholar traveling in Peking (now Beijing) got hold of a copy and translated it into English.

In explaining the style and language in which he translated the work from the Chinese, the unnamed English scholar wrote in his letter to his patron, the Earl of Derby: "The sublime manner of thinking which appeared in the introduction, the great energy of expression, and the shorness of the sentences naturally led me to this kind of style." Reproduced here is Chapter 4 of Book Five, entitled "Magistrates and Subjects."

"O Thou the favourite of Heaven, whom the sons of men, thy equals, have agreed to raise to the sovereign power, and set as a rule over themselves; consider the ends and importance of their trust far more than the dignity and height of thy station.

"Thou art clothed in purple, and seated on a throne, the crown of majesty investeth thy temples, the scepter of power is placed in thy hand; but not for thyself were these ensigns given; not meant for thine own, but the good of thy kingdom.

"The glory of a king is the welfare of his people, his power and dominion resteth on the hearts of his subjects.

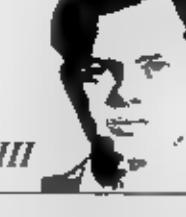
"The mind of a great prince is exalted with the grandeur of his situation; he reserveth high things, and searcheth for business worthy of his power.

"He calleth together the wise men of his kingdom, he consulteth among them with freedom, and heareth the opinions of them all.

"He looketh among his people with discernment, he discovereth the abilities of men, and employeth them according to their merits.

Joy is a toy

THE LONG VIEW

*Manuel L. Quezon III*

of profiteering.

Surely you've encountered such kids. They have an instinctive, and extremely shrewd, understanding of the value of things, and once mom and dad give them an outstanding present, they scurry off, and hide it. The board grows, toys later on joined by comic books and other curios, until the decades have rolled by, puberty and their teenage unpopularity are forgotten, at which time they start selling their presents and raking in the cash.

J.R.R. Tolkien probably had such kids in mind, when he created the greedy dragon Smaug, who literally loited around on a pile of gold, glorying in his own avarice. Many a writer with a moral sense has done likewise, populating children's stories with creatures and characters who come to a nasty end, because of their refusal to cherish the awe, wonder and irresponsibility that childhood's supposed to bring.

Unfortunately, real life isn't like Tolkien's Middle Earth, and so the Smaug-kids are the ones who end up laughing all the way to the bank, while everyone else has to make do with reminiscing about the toys they used to have, once upon a time.

With the nostalgia for the toys—that once-were comes a kind of exasperation with the toys of today. Taken to extremes, it leads to the kind of in-house homilies that can be a source of great amusement for less sensitive children.

You know the drill. "Oh, in the old days, we played with blocks of wood! We had no video games that rot the brain! We used our imaginations! Our blocks of wood could be piled up to create palaces, or fortifications, or, if we were hungry, we could chew on them and play with the splinters!" Followed by a lecture on how fortunate today's kids are to be luxuriating in homes with electricity and who enjoy the wonders of television.

Such sermonettes, I suppose, are preferable to parents who insist on being hideously out of touch when it comes to gift-giving. One year, my father expended a tremendous amount of energy, as it involved contacting a cousin in Mexico, the last place on earth where the toy he wanted to procure was still manufactured. Handing me the present, he excitedly babbled about the hours and hours of educational fun he had, circa 1934, playing with his Meccano set.

This must be an amazing thing, I said to myself, as I tore open the wrapper. I opened the box. "You gave me ... nuts and bolts? And steel plate?" I finally said, in disbelief.

He turned red, and said, "Well, yes. You get the sheet metal, which has perforations, and you screw them together." He rummaged through the box and took out some bits and pieces. "Look, if you get this piece, and thread this screw through the perforation, and get another, smaller piece, like this one, and then don't attach the nut on too tight, it can be a propeller."

What really got my goat was that at that point, he spun the bit of metal and smiled, and said, "Whur, whur. Add wings and it's a... I don't know, a Stuka dive-bomber!"

I made the best of it and said, "Wheel!" I knew better than to push my luck and launch an impassioned protest on the basis of my absolute lack of a mechanical orientation.

The funny thing is (and it proves how adaptable children can be) that I did end up spending many hours playing with my Meccano set, but perhaps in a way no one would have imagined. Since I was utterly unmechanically inclined, I discovered that you could use the various nuts and bolts to symbolize soldiers and tanks. Better yet, you could simply throw the nuts and bolts at real toy soldiers, all the better to slay them with.

But that was in a more innocent age, when boys could play with toy soldiers, and find all sorts of ways to massacre armies, without feeling any guilt. Today, of course, the Toys for Peace movement frowns on such things.

After all, you can never do wrong by giving a kid a box of paints. Impossible to hoard, and a joy to use.

Merry Christmas, senior citizens

FIRST OF ALL, LET ME GREET THE ALABANG SENIORS Golf Association (ASGA) led by Archie Lacson after a most enjoyable two-day golf tournament—mostly in the rain—at the Alabang Golf and Country Club. While we didn't do too well with partner Mel Goyena, it was a great way to wrap up the old year and prepare for another season of golfing happiness with the determination to score that elusive hole-in-one.

Also I would like to congratulate the Camp Aguinaldo Seniors Golf Association led by Clyde Fernandez for a successful year-end tournament which saw the attendance of many senior golfers, civilian and military, led by AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. and former President Fidel V. Ramos. Kudos also go to Aguinaldo Club manager Rey Ochoa for the many improvements of the course, especially the introduction of the golf carts for the benefit of the senior players. We hope to see more of these innovations in the months ahead.

Also high on my list of golfing events during the past few weeks was the annual Philippine Navy Golf Tournament, which came to a close with a fantastic evening capped by the Mother of All Raffles. The grand prize was a Toyota Vios which originally was offered as a hole-in-one premium. Since it was not won during the tournament, the Navy decided to raffle it off during the awards night. I don't think any golf club in this country has been able to match the Navy prizes. Congratulations to Rear Adm. Amable Tolentino, chair of the Philippine Navy Golf Club.

Incidentally, for golfers and other athletes who may be suffering from sprains, bruises, contusions or similar injuries because of sports activities, there's a young myovasotherapist (one who specializes in muscles and blood vessels), Miguel del Prado, who has built up a reputation for the successful treatment of all kinds of difficulties associated with our muscles, tendons and ligaments.

Miguel is the son of Jose Ramon del Prado, a La Sallite now running the family farm in Negros Oriental. He is also the grandson of Jose del Prado, a classmate of former AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Manuel Yan, at the Philippine Military Academy. Both belong to the class of 1941. Miguel probably has the cutest email address in town: mgyyako@yahoo.com. You can check him out if you need help at Tel. No. 8926397.

This Christmas season, we thank the Almighty for the healing hands of this gifted young man.

For most of the year, I have been discussing in this space the various benefits that have come our way as senior citizens. Foremost among them has been the 20-percent discount that we enjoy in the purchase of medicines and meals in a restaurant. So far, we have made steady progress in creating a greater awareness of the laws covering these entitlements, but we still have a long way to go for the full enjoyment of what is called for in the Constitution as far as senior citizens are concerned.

Today, I would like to turn away from those benefits and entitlements in order to focus on a list of ideas that touch on our lives as senior citizens. You may have come across them in different ways, possibly as the Ten Commandments of senior citizens, or as rules for those who are 60 and above.

Let me dwell on just a few of them as food for thought during the holiday season.

1. Let's face it and accept the fact that we are getting old. This has consequences and somehow we must learn to adjust in view of our limitations. We can moan about aging or we can rejoice in the wisdom that goes hand in hand with experience.

The comedian Lucille Ball looked at things from a different perspective. Instead of thinking in terms of getting old, she focused on the secret of staying young. She said, "The secret of staying young is to live honestly, eat slowly and lie about your age."

2. Plan and spend what you've saved. You deserve to enjoy it in the few healthy years left in your life. Travel if you can afford it. Don't leave anything for your children or loved ones to quarrel about. Instead of helping, you can even cause more trouble when you're gone.

During our last visit to the United States, I picked up an interesting book, entitled "1003 Great Things About Getting Older." There's a chapter on "Why You Owe It To Yourself To Die Poor." It is written from the American viewpoint, but some of the thoughts are applicable to all of us.

"Many people behave as though the purpose of having money is not to buy the home they've always dreamed of, but to ensure that their grandchildren will be able to fly business class to their funeral. This behavior makes no sense. Why sacrifice now so that you can be wealthy when you're dead?"

"Here's what you should do:

"• Cash in your life insurance. You insured your life when you were young because you were worried that your kids might not get to college if anything happened to you. Well, nothing happened to you and your children all have diplomas. More to the point, they have mentioned nothing about paying you back. So, dump your policy and invest those premiums in the finest wines available.

"• Borrow, borrow, borrow. If you don't want to sell your house, turn it from an asset into a liability. Take out the biggest loan you can, set aside just enough to cover the monthly payments between now and your estimated date of death, and spend, spend, spend.

"• Sell the family jewels. If you hang on to your diamonds, your children will auction them off before your corpse is cold. Sell everything now and spend the proceeds on stuff that you can eat, drink, drive or use.

"• Enjoy your life with your spouse, children, grandchildren and friends. People love you for yourself, not for what you have. If they love you for what you have, they will just be a source of misery for you.

"• Befriend death. It's part of life. Don't be afraid of it. It's the beginning of a new and better life. So prepare yourself, not for death, but for a new life."

Former French President Francois Mitterrand made the following comments before his death due to prostate cancer: "The fear of death is virtually meaningless. We need to have the humility that in death, we are in the company of countless others and that death is the only certain destiny that awaits us all. I am not overly pre-occupied with death, but rather by the enormous question mark it represents. Is it nothingness? That's possible. If it is not, then what a great adventure lies ahead."

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Duterte showed ban can work

MAYOR RODRIGO DUTERTE IS one local government executive whom other local officials would like to emulate but, sad to say, can't. In many instances, during his previous tenure as the chief executive of Davao City, Mayor Duterte showed that he could exercise political will.

I strongly feel that he will again

ban the sale of firecrackers and pyrotechnics to prevent the loss of lives and damage to limbs and properties. More importantly, he will again urge his constituents to observe the solemnity of Christmas and celebrate it better with the true meaning of the birth of Jesus Christ in mind.

We hope that all the other LGU

executives and the national leadership will also be able to exercise the political will to ban the use of firecrackers.

Let us all have a really happy and blessed Christmas season.

—JERRY A. QUILIBLAN,
Crusaders for Peace, Prosperity,
Unity, and Love,
jerryaquiniblan@yahoo.com

Balikbayan searching for wife's relatives in Leyte

I HAVE BEEN AN AVID READER of the INQUIRER ever since I returned from the United States. I am 82 years old and served in the government for almost 30 years. I am a World War II veteran waiting for the approval by the US Congress of the proposed law on equity rights and the supposed increase of our pension from the Philippine government.

I like the INQUIRER for its balanced reports and for publishing letters for or against the govern-

ment. But I like the INQUIRER most for its editorials and the opinions of all its columnists. I spend almost half of the day reading the INQUIRER because I get from it the more important news about politics, business, sports and entertainment. I hope the INQUIRER will always inform the readers what's really happening in our country and what our rotten politicians are doing. More power to the newspaper and its staff.

Is US Embassy staff playing with Filipinos' feelings?

I HOPE THIS LETTER CATCHES the eyes of US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice or Ambassador Kristie Kenney.

To celebrate our silver wedding anniversary, my wife and I, together with a retired, childless couple (our relatives), decided to apply for a US non-immigrant visa. Our interview was set on Sept. 13, 2007—10 a.m. for us, and 11 a.m. for our relatives. In our application forms, we wrote the same contact person and address: our relative's brother, who is a US citizen residing at Mariner Cove, Buena Park, California.

We were interviewed by a female consul who was very cordial. After a couple of questions to me and my very nervous wife, she gave us two yellow slips which, if you ask all interviewees at the embassy, was a sign that you passed.

She told us, "Your visas are approved, please proceed to Delbros," the courier company which delivers passports stamped with US visas, and pay the corresponding delivery fees. My heart nearly leapt off my chest! I shouted in my mind, Penway Park! Curt Schilling!

Jonathan Pappelbon! Go Red Sox! Followed by Ami James! Cris Nufiez! Cris Garver! Darren Brass and my crush, Kat Von D! All of Miami Ink!

After imagining myself going to these two sites in the United States, I told myself, I can die with a smile on my face afterwards. We proceeded to Delbros and paid the corresponding fees, then went back home to Tarlac City.

Unknown to us, our relatives were interviewed by the same consul. The consul noticed that our applications named the same contact person in the United States. They later told us that they were whisked to the anti-fraud section of the embassy because we had the same contact person. The question is: Is it illegal, fraudulent to have the same contact person, same fonts in our computer-generated application forms? Our relatives' passports were given back to them and told that their visa applications were not denied and neither were they disapproved.

We brushed that incident aside and excitedly waited for our visas. The Delbros courier arrived but

when we opened the package, there were no visas in our passports and it contained blue forms telling us we were denied!

The courier told me that in his five years with Delbros, it was his first time to deliver a denied application. In the form, there are boxes beside each of the four possible reasons for denying an applicant a non-immigrant visa. If any of the reasons exists, the box beside it was supposed to be marked with an X. Not one of the four boxes in our forms was marked with an X.

Our lifelong dream of visiting the United States was suddenly back to being just a dream—again. Is it OK for the US Embassy to fool around and play with people's minds and hearts? Telling them their visa applications have been approved but sending them a contrary notice? I'm keeping our yellow forms, Delbros receipts and blue forms as brutal reminders of what we suffered at the hands of the US Embassy consular section in Manila.

—BERNARDINO L. FLORES JR.,
3820 Aquino Subd., Tarlac City



Calamities can't cover up scandals

FOR SEVERAL DAYS LAST NOVEMBER, typhoons Lando and Mina provided the public some relief from the cruel reports about a number of irregularities that implicated the Arroyo administration. President Macapagal-Arroyo must have relished the opportunity to project a concerned image in the well-publicized preparations in the event the typhoons would hit any part of the country.

Some sort of a typhoon watch was set up in the Bicol region in anticipation of typhoon "Mina." A blow-by-blow account of the preparations was covered by government radio and TV networks, reporting live GMA's conversations with the governors and national officials involved in the effort.

As "Mina" veered toward the North, GMA ordered the procurement of two Doppler radars to bolster Pagasa's arsenal for weather forecasting. Doppler radars have been on the buying list of Pagasa (formerly the Weather Bureau) for 40 years, since the watch of Director Roman Kintanar who was given international recognition for his contributions in meteorology. What more could he have contributed if he had a properly equipped organization?

And there was the Batasan bombing, like the Glorietta 2 explosion a month earlier, hogging the headlines for several days and filling the air for many weeks and contributing to the aura of violence-wrapped Philippine politics.

Still, these incidents must have been a welcome distraction from the GMA-linked scandals that are now too embedded in the public consciousness and cannot anymore be obliterated by natural calamities like typhoons, industrial accidents, political mass murder, or even coup attempts.

—E.P. DAKANAY JR.,
43 Baltazar St.,
Philamlife Village,
Pampanga, Las Piñas City

FVR spoke on Peninsula takeover

WE REFER TO THE NEWS STORY "Cory, FVR mum, Erap subdued, says he'll wait and see" in the Nov. 30, 2007 issue of the INQUIRER, which reported that "former President Fidel Ramos refused to comment" on the then unfolding developments in the Trillanes takeover of Peninsula Manila.

Please allow us to correct this erroneous report. At about 1 p.m. on Nov. 29, 2007, FVR was at the Grand Hyatt Hotel where he was guest of honor and keynote speaker in the International College of Surgeons (Philippine Chapter) Annual Convention. After delivering his address, he was interviewed by NBN anchor Noel Perfecto on the Peninsula Manila "invasion."

FVR strongly condemned the coup attempt which he said, would not succeed and not work, or not bring about regime change or reforms. He also said that such course of action (already tried by the Oakwood rebels unsuccessfully in July 2003) would only hurt the economy, with ordinary Filipinos being the ultimate victims and losers. The interview was in fact aired by NBN several times during the day and is preserved in that network's records.

During the Manila Pen takeover, I called up former President Ramos several times for his reaction but there was no answer. I asked Ed Malay, his media adviser, about the former president's reaction. Malay said Ramos had no comment. Malay further said that Ramos was at home monitoring the developments on TV. So I quoted Malay, not Ramos. Malay's name, however, was deleted during the editing of the story.

Last night, I called up Malay for his comment on the letter above, and he gave this statement:

"At the time Ms Cynthia Balana called, the former president was not yet at the Hyatt Hotel where he was to deliver a keynote speech... What was reported was FVR's movement prior to the time he made his reaction."

—CYNTHIA D. BALANA,
reporter, Inquirer

Bleak future seen in children's choice

THIS IS ABOUT THE TOP 10 TV programs and personalities given the Anak TV sea.

If our children, our country's hope of the future, indeed prefer sensational news and crime/police stories, easy-money game shows and petty melodramas, then our future looks bleak. It was so shocking to note that the personalities chosen were "news readers" and popu-

lar show-biz stars some of whom have questionable reputations and values.

Anyway, it is still an adult TV world, I don't think our children have a real say on what they can watch; they only follow their elders.

May God bless the future of the Philippines.

—GANILLE DAN,
ganbox2010@yahoo.com

If you have any complaints, grievances or suggestions about the treatment of news and photos by the Inquirer, you may write to the Readers' Advocate, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue, corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, City of Makati or send a fax to Nos. 897-4793, 897-4794, or e-mail readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph

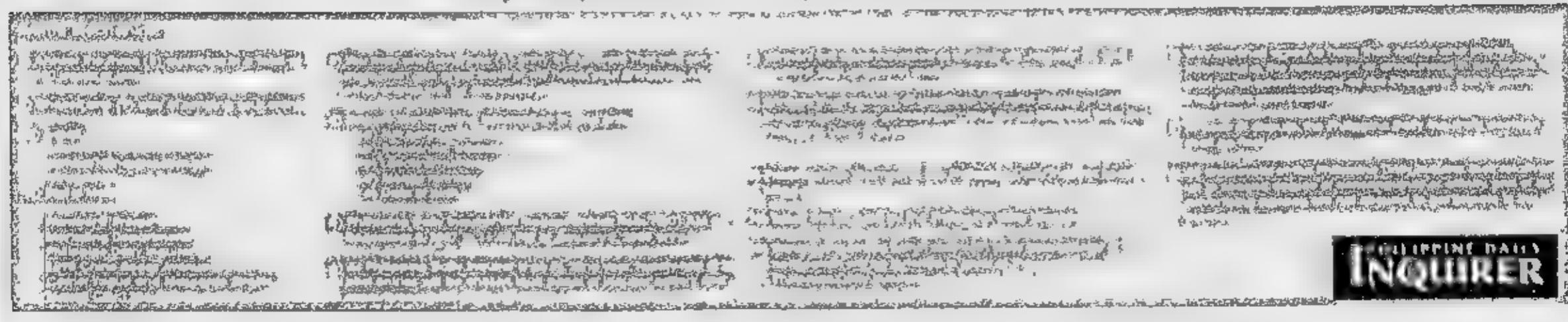
Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.



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As we celebrate our 22nd anniversary, Inquirer grants 22 loyal readers their wishes – from an exciting wish like meeting your local idol to a romantic one like celebrating your 25th wedding anniversary in a beach resort. Let us know what you really want. In 300 words or less, tell us:

- 1) How long have you been reading the Philippine Daily Inquirer?
- 2) What do you like most about the Inquirer, and we dare ask, what do you like least?
- 3) What is your number 1 wish that Inquirer can grant you, and why?



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LTO orders audit of luxury car deals

By Jolene R. Bulambot
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—THE HEAD OF THE LAND TRANSPORTATION Office in Central Visayas has ordered an audit of all transactions by its field offices in the region, particularly the registrations of imported vehicles.

Acting on reports that most of the 81 expensive European-made cars seized in a Makati City auto repair center last week came from Cebu, LTO 7 director Alex Leyson said he has tasked the LTO Regional Internal Audit Division, headed by Roger Bal-

bon, to inventory all the transactions of the regional office.

Leyson said he wanted to know if indeed luxury cars imported from Europe were being given new registrations by his office.

Leyson, however, said he could not comment on the alle-

gations that LTO officials were in cahoots with persons involved in the illegal importation and undervaluation of European luxury cars.

But he admitted that some officials of Presidential Anti-Smuggling Group (PASG) coordinated with his office in September to ask for documents covering the importation and registration of some brand new vehicles.

Leyson said PASG officials were trying to verify the Certificate of Payments (CPs) of importation tax for brand new and high-end cars suspected to be either undervalued or fake.

"It's possible that the CP could be fake but LTO officials could not really ascertain if these were undervalued because it is the customs officials who issue these documents. As long as the applicant for registration has complied with all the necessary requirements, it is ministerial on our part to grant the registration," he said.

Leyson said the audit would also address the claim of Cebu Auto Dealers Association that smuggling of luxury cars has become rampant in Cebu as evidenced by the almost 20,000 difference between the number of

vehicles registered by the LTO in the region in 2006 against the number of cars sold by legitimate dealers over the same year.

Cebu customs district collector Ricardo Belmonte yesterday maintained there was no basis yet for PASG to say that many of the 81 luxury vehicles it seized in Makati came from Cebu.

Belmonte, however, said he would welcome any investigation.

"They are talking without proofs. By all means, they can check our records here. Even before I assumed office a year and a half ago, we could see all

these luxury vehicles plying in the streets of Cebu. I was even asking where all these vehicles came from? Since I assumed my post, I have been very strict in the requirements and we had apprehensions," he said.

Jerry Perez, assistant director for Public Information Office of PASG, said they have recovered several documents such as the CPs indicating that the luxury vehicles they raided in Makati actually came from Cebu.

Perez, however, declined to further comment on the issue since they still had to complete their investigation.

Actress' lawyer says Pulupandan mayor still in the country

By Carla P. Gomez
Inquirer Visayas

BACOLOD CITY—CONTRARY TO HIS CLAIM, Pulupandan Mayor Magdaleno Peña and his 3-year-old son have not left the country, records at the Bureau of Immigration showed.

Lawyer Evalyn Ursua, legal counsel of movie actress and television host Marie Roxanne "Plinky" Recto, told the INQUIRER that the Bureau of Immigration has certified that its last record of Peña leaving the country was in 2002 yet.

Peña has disappeared along with his young son soon after the Supreme Court Third Division ordered him on Dec. 5 to return his son to Recto, the child's mother, pending resolution of their bitter custody battle for the 3-year-old boy.

Under Article 176 of the Family Code illegitimate children should be under the sole custody of their mother, the Supreme Court said.

When the National Bureau of Investigation searched the house of Peña in Barangay Ubay, Pulupandan, Negros Occidental for the second time on Dec. 20 to look for the boy, Peña in a telephone interview, told reporters that he and his son were out of the country.

But the BI has no records showing that Peña and the boy have left the country from Jan. 1 to Dec. 18, 2007, Ursua said.

Motion

Ursua said the 10 days time given to the NBI to find the boy lapsed Saturday and if they still fail to find him, she will file a motion before the SC asking that a warrant of arrest be issued against Peña.

"We will also ask the SC to issue a hold departure order to prevent Peña and the boy from leaving the country and to exercise its contempt powers because, as a lawyer, Peña is clearly defying the law," she said.

The order to turn over the child to Recto states that it was immediately executory, which means that it could no longer be subjected to a motion for reconsideration as claimed by Peña, Ursua said.

The conflicting statements of Peña on his and the child's whereabouts appear to be meant to mislead, she said.

"We believe he is still in the country and he is either very good in hiding, or the NBI is not doing its job," she said.

His house in Pulupandan is the last place he would be in, she said.

"I do not believe the NBI cannot locate him. If they cannot, they are admitting that he is more clever than them," Ursua said.

Ursua said they also would want to find what the NBI has been doing now to find the child after their failed search on Peña's house in Pulupandan.

NBI Bacolod chief Mamerto Cortez yesterday also said he strongly believed Peña and his 3-year-old son have not left the country.

Cortez said he does not believe Peña is in Negros but could be in some other part of the country where he owns property.

**HOLIDAY SPARKLERS**

City folk in Davao del Sur rush to buy firecrackers sold anywhere in the streets despite warning by local authorities. More vendors are expected to have a midnight display of their wares on Christmas Eve.

ORLANDO DINOV, INQUIRER MINDANAO

Top cop plays Santa to 'Tagaytay 5'

By Marion Ramos
Inquirer Southern Luzon

CAMP VICENTE LIM, LAGUNA—While they won't be home with their families and friends this Christmas, five farmers detained here on suspicion of being communist rebels got one of their fervent wishes—spend more time with their loved ones even inside their detention cell.

After being subjected to sparsely

strict jail security since their arrest and incarceration more than a year ago,

the five farmers, now collectively

known as "Tagaytay 5," have been al-

lowed by the newly appointed director

of the Calabarzon police to be visited

by their families during weekends.

In a recent interview with the IN-

QUIRER, Chief Supt. Ricardo Padilla

said he had ordered members of the

Base Police Office at this camp to re-

spect all privileges given to prison-

ers, including their rights to sun-

ning and outdoor exercises.

"Those five detainees are humans,

too. Their rights should be respect-

ed," Padilla told the INQUIRER.

The five detainees—Aris Sarmiento, Rico Ybañez, Riel Custodio, Axel Pinpin and Michael Mesayes—have been jailed at the

20-meter custodial jail here since

May 2006 after they were arrested

in Tagaytay City for supposedly

planning to bring down the Arroyo administration.

The five were held incommunicado for at least a week before they were eventually charged for rebellion.

They have been incarcerated since without being arraigned.

Since their detention, their police guards only allowed them to see their visitors on limited time on certain days.

Dialogue

Padilla, who took over the helm of the Calabarzon police from retired Chief Supt. Nicasio Radovan Jr on Nov. 8, visited the detainees at their cell last Dec. 18.

His visit was prompted by a letter sent to him by the prisoners who wanted to have a dialogue with him.

During a 15-minute talk with the detainees, Padilla made it clear that the Calabarzon police had asked Tagaytay Regional Trial Court Judge Edwin Landia, the judge handling their rebellion case, to transfer them to a regular jail facility but their request had not yet been granted.

"This is just a temporary deten-tion cell. This is not meant to have prisoners like you for a long period of time," Padilla told the detainees.

He then quickly reviewed the contents of the prisoners' handwritten letter dated Nov. 22, which indi-

cated their desire to have a better prison condition.

Swiftly, Padilla allowed five of the 10 requests made by the prisoners.

Aside from allowing them to see their visitors on weekends, he let the five to have their beddings inside their cell.

Instead of constructing a visitor's area, Padilla ordered the police guards to allow the five to talk with their visitors inside the jail.

Padilla, the first police general who visited the five, also instructed the guards to allow the five to have their regular outdoor activities and ensure that they are regularly given medical attention.

He, however, turned down the appeal of the Tagaytay farmers for an increase in their daily budget for meals from P40 to P90 and others regarding the speedy resolution of rebellion case filed against them.

"That's already beyond my pow-

ers," he said.

Sarmiento said they were thankful for Padilla's decision to order "his men to abide by what the Constitution afforded prisoners like us."

He said what Padilla consented to were actually the same issues they fought for when they held a 40-day hunger strike a few months ago.

Sarmiento added: "We just hope he will do what he promised us."

5th in Eastern Visayas

Padilla said the DOH is monitoring the Filipina wife of the AIDS victim to determine her health conditions.

The death of the American made him the fifth person in the region to have died due to AIDS since it was first recorded in Eastern Visayas in the early 1980s. The regional health office has reported that 18 persons have been afflicted with the disease in the Leyte and Samar provinces.

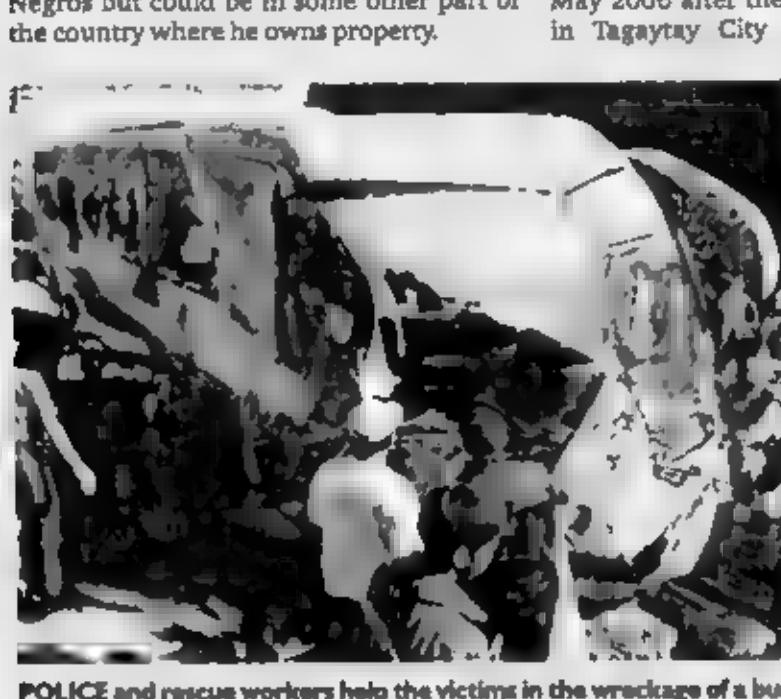
Republic Act No. 8504, which sets the policies and guidelines on AIDS in the country, defined the disease as a "condition characterized by a combination of signs and symptoms, caused by the HIV contracted from another person and which attacks and weakens the body's immune system, making the afflicted individual susceptible to other life-threatening infections."

Aside from sexual intercourse, the disease could be spread through blood transfusion, sharing of intravenous needles and during pregnancy.

December 1 marks the annual observance of the World's AIDS Day that has so far killed 2.1 million people since it was discovered in 1984, data of the United Nations/World Health Organization AIDS Epidemiology update revealed.

The DOH-8 has been urging local governments in the region to establish an AIDS council, which could help disseminate information about the disease and to better address issues like the "stigma" attached to it.

In Leyte, the Leyte Family Development Organization is doing its information dissemination campaign about AIDS.



POLICE and rescue workers help the victims in the wreckage of a bus that slammed into a boulder when its brakes malfunctioned in a highway in Tuba, Benguet.

1 dead, 6 hurt in Benguet road accident

BAGUIO CITY—A BUS DRIVER of a university in Bicol was killed while at least six others were hurt on Sunday when their bus hit a boulder along Marcos Highway in Tuba, Benguet, police said.

The bus, registered to the government-run Bicol University in Legazpi City, was carrying 42 teachers and students, two drivers and two relatives of one of the drivers, but only six were confined for various injuries at the Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center (BGHMC) here.

Reports from the Tuba police said Jose Emmanuel Rojas, the driver, was already dead when

rescue workers reached him.

The Manila-bound bus, according to reports, was cruising along Marcos Highway near Barangay Bondiway in Tuba when Rojas lost control of the vehicle at about 8:40 a.m. The bus' right portion hit a mountain side before it stopped.

Investigators had yet to determine what caused the accident.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development here took custody of Rojas' 4-year-old daughter, April, after the accident because her mother was among those confined at the BGHMC.

Benedicto Alhambra, city tourism officer, said the group

attended a two-day seminar at the Benguet State University in La Trinidad town.

"Rojas was a back-up driver. This was a caravan of four buses from Bicol and they were here for a state college seminar," Alhambra said.

In Mt. Province, a stretch of road where nine people died in an accident last month was closed last week when elders held a cleansing ritual to prevent more accidents there.

The elders from Besao town performed the ritual, called "pag-dalos," along the Sagada-Dantay road because accidents had often occurred there, according to

Thomas Kilip, presidential assistant for Cordillera affairs.

"The ritual was meant to ask the spirits along the road to remove or prevent any misfortune recurring in those sections of the road," said Kilip, a former mayor of Sagada town.

Vehicles bound for Sagada and Besao towns stopped plying the route to allow the elders to perform the ritual.

On Nov. 28, nine people were killed and nine others were hurt when a jeepney fell into a ravine in Barangay Dapdapanan in Sagada. Vincent Cabresa and Desires Calusa, *Inquirer Northern Luzon*

Villagers flee homes in Sulu, Maguindanao

THOUSANDS OF VILLAGERS FLED their homes as fighting flared during the past two days between government troops and several Islamic secessionists in Sulu and Maguindanao, killing a Marine soldier and an undetermined number of rebels.

The 2nd Marine Brigade suffered its lone casualty in an encounter on Dec. 22 with about 40 rebels belonging to the Abu Sayyaf group and a "rogue faction" of the Moro National Liberation Front in Kajang Galang town in Sulu.

Another soldier and at least five civilians were wounded in the dawn firefight in Barangay Pandapandan, brigade commander Col Cesario Atienza said.

Atienza withheld the identity of the slain soldier but named the wounded Marine soldier as Cpl. Wilmer Arostik.

Brig. Gen. Reuben Rafael, commander of the antiterrorist Task Force Comet, said the others injured were civilians used as shields by the retreating rebels. The civilian hostages were later released.

Pursuing troops, backed by air and naval reinforcements, recovered seven rifles and assorted ammunitions, leading them to believe that the rebels suffered "heavy casualties," the officers said.

In Datu Piang, Maguindanao, thousands of Moro inhabitants

from at least five villages left their homes after hostilities broke out between militiamen and members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) on Friday.

Lt. Col. Julieto Ando, spokesperson of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said reports of casualties have yet to be determined as dozens of houses were torched by the rebels, reportedly led by a Commander Duma Anayatin.

The MILF, which is talking peace with the government, agreed to a ceasefire in 2003. Malaysian-backed peace talks, however, recently broke down. Julie S. Alipata, Ed General and Charlie C. Señase, Inquirer Mindanao

Kids wish parents home by Christmas

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—MAY WAN DOMINADO, 25, is busy wrapping gifts for her cousins and relatives in time for Christmas.

She will also accompany her younger sister Tamara, 15, to the mall to buy presents.

For the first time, she is taking over these roles for her Nanay.

They do not know if her mother, Maria Luisa Poso-Dominado, will be home for Christmas. But they hope so.

Her mother has remained missing eight months after she and fellow activist Nilo Arado were forcibly taken by heavily armed men in Barangay Cabananan in Oton town in Iloilo on April 12. Their companion, human rights worker Jose Ely Garachico was shot and seriously wounded but was left behind.

The victims' vehicle was found hours later badly burned in a sugar-cane field in Barangay Guadalupe in Janauay town in Iloilo around 30 km from where the activists were waylaid and taken. But there were no traces of the victims.

The victims' families and colleagues have accused the military of carrying out the abduction but this has been repeatedly denied by military officials.

Aside from following up the cases they filed in court, May Wan said it has also been difficult acting as a mother to her sister.

She said it would have been harder if her mother had not trained her to be independent especially when Dominado was detained for several years for rebellion charges during the Aquino administration.

But her mother's absence is felt by the whole clan.

"Nanay was the main organizer of family gatherings. She always found a way for us to be together," said May Wan in an interview on Friday, after she attended a court hearing on the petition for a writ of amparo filed by the victims' families.

Despite being always busy with her work in the various militant organizations she was involved with, from organizing farmers in Maasin and Janauay towns to campaigning for the party-list groups Bayan Muna and Anakpawis or meeting with former political detainees, Dominado had time for family gatherings.

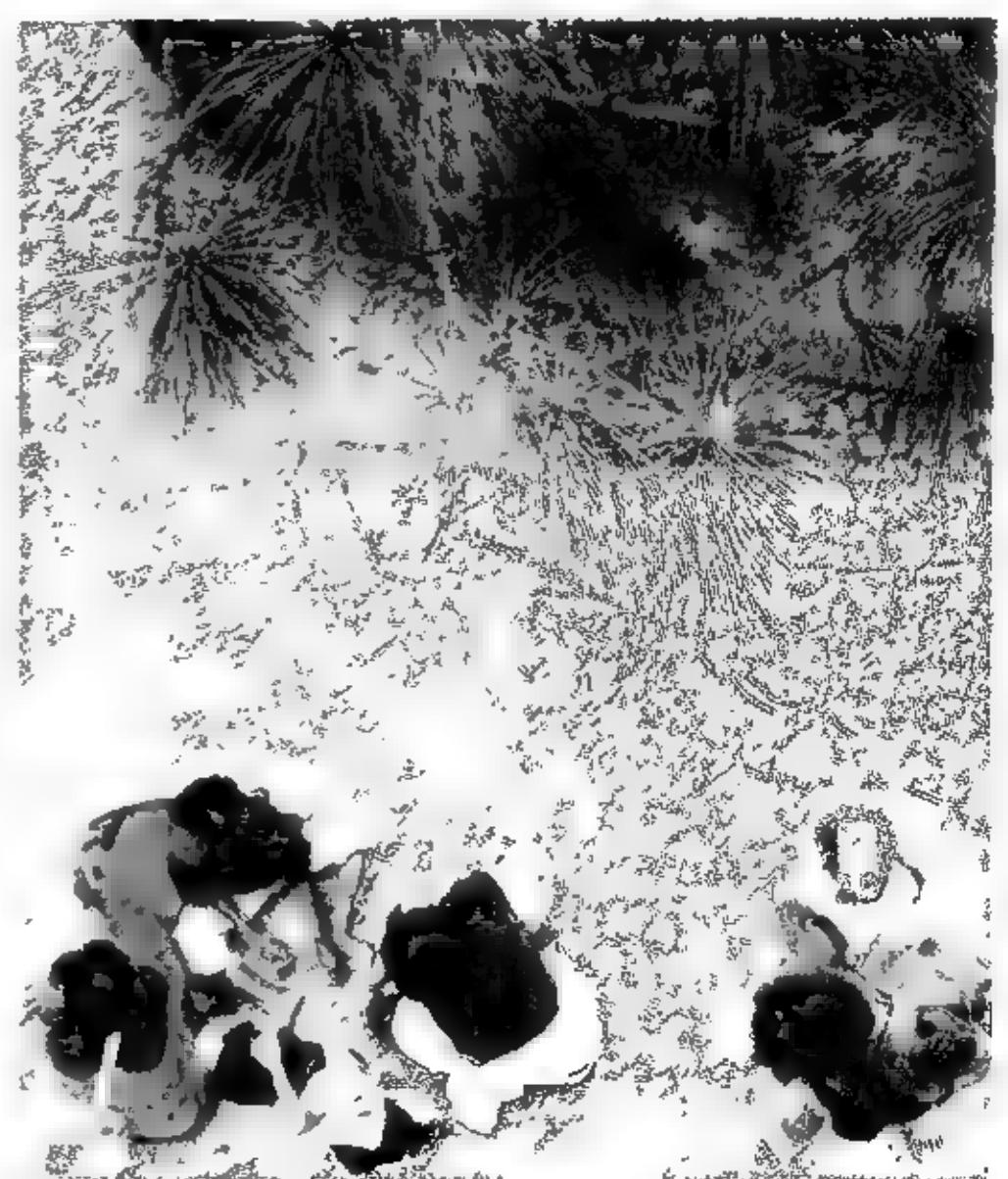
May Wan said her mother would assign tasks and responsibilities for family gatherings held on special occasions like Christmas and New Year at the Poso family compound in Jaro District. "Her absence is felt because it's hard to fill her role," said May Wan. Arado's wife Rosemarie, 36, said

"He only asks that his Papa will be home," said Rosemarie.

She said each day that her husband remained missing, it has become more difficult to answer their son's questions.

"He always asks if his Papa was still coming home and if my going to Iloilo City to attend hearings will bring him back."

"As long as we have not found them, we will not lose hope," Rosemarie said.



AETA KIDS IN BAGUIO

Mendicancy and charity appear to wed every Yuletide season, encouraging indigenous Filipinos to visit the summer capital in December.

VINCENT CABREZA/INQUIRER NORTHERN LUZON

Suspect in Aklan radioman's slay yields

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY A SUSPECT IN THE 2001 murder of Aklan broadcaster Rolando Ureta surrendered to the police on Dec. 18, three weeks after another suspect was arrested.

Jessie Ticar said he would surrender to the police during an interview aired over radio station dyKR of Radio Mindanao Network where Ureta was program director before he was gunned down in Jan. 3, 2001.

Ticar asked the policemen from the Kalibo police station to arrest him at the office of his lawyer, Joann Ibutnande, according to Aklan provincial police director Senior Supt. Benigno Durana Jr.

The police presented Ticar to the Kalibo Regional Trial Court Branch 1 where he is accused of murder after his arrest.

Ureta's widow Emely thanked all those

who have helped in Roland's case. "God is good," she said.

Durana said Ticar decided to turn himself in and defend himself in court because Dec. 19 was the arraignment of his co-suspect Amador Raz.

Raz was arrested on Nov. 26 in Numancia town based on a warrant issued on Nov. 21 by Judge Marietta Hornena-Valencia, presiding judge of the Kalibo RTC Branch 1.

A lone witness, Gerson Sonio, has identified Ticar and Raz as the ones who shot dead Ureta along the national highway in Barangay Bagtu, Lazo town, Aklan, about 7 km west of the capital town of Kalibo.

The suspects denied involvement in the killing and have questioned the credibility of the witness.

Ureta was driving a motorcycle on his way to his parents' house when two suspects on a motorcycle shot him.

Cordillerans abroad ready to fund Ifugao scholars

BAGUIO CITY—CORDILLERANS BASED abroad are willing to send Ifugao youths to school should they decide to stay home and maintain the upkeep of their ancestral rice terraces.

Organizers of the International Igorot Congress (IIC) are holding the group's 7th conference in Ifugao in 2008, and are beefing up its various educational initiatives to help keep the Cordillera's world-renowned "living artifacts" alive, said Ursula Daoey, Brent School principal and IIC secretary.

Young Ifugaos have been leaving the province, leaving no one to maintain the centuries-old rice terraces that their families own, said Ifugao Gov. Teodoro Bagulat Jr. in a speech he read before an environment conference at Chiang Mai, Thailand, last month.

"Abandonment and [the] conversion of the rice terraces in favor of a more lucrative livelihood are threatening the existence of the heritage landscapes. The outmigration of educated Ifugaos and farmers posed a big problem to the continuity of the cultivation of the terraces and maintenance of the muogong (community forests)," he said.

"Some rice fields are being converted to residential and commercial areas due to the increasing population of the province and the influx of tourists while some change their rice crops to vegetables or rice and vegetables alternately," he said.

The Batad and Bangaan terraces in Banaue town, the Nagacadan terraces in Kiangan town, the Hungduan terraces, and the Mayaoao terraces were inscribed in the list of the World Heritage Sites by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco).

But these were also included in the Unesco's list of endangered heritage sites after the government abolished the agencies tasked with maintaining the terraces.

Purification Molintas, Cordillera director of the Department of Tourism, said the

provincial government of Ifugao now has the sole responsibility of conserving and restoring the terraces.

At a Wednesday news conference, the IIC organizers said they chose to conduct the conference in Banaue in April 2008 to drum up world interest in the terraces.

More than 500 delegates from the United States, Europe, Australia and Asia were expected to join the event to immerse themselves in the issues that contribute to the terraces' deterioration, the organizers said.

Juan Ngatob, IIC president and Cordillera director of the National Economic and Development Authority, said the IIC is studying how local infrastructure can enrich its projects.

He said IIC's primary goal is to restore the dignified image of the Igorot to the world, and to direct its resources on tangible programs like saving the rice terraces.

Daoey said the IIC has been interested in Ifugao's radical approach to keep the youth interested in maintaining the terraces.

One such approach is to open alternative projects for which the IIC scholarship programs can be redesigned and readjusted, she said.

Bagulat said the Ifugao State College of Agriculture and Forestry (Iscaf) has been hiring local artisans to teach indigenous knowledge to students interested in farming, woodcarving and weaving.

But he said alternative programs, such as those started in Iscaf, need to be subsidized until they begin to attract interest from Ifugao residents.

The IIC is also interested in how the government has progressed in fulfilling indigenous Filipino rights, Ngatob said.

Cordillera autonomy, for example, is a constitutional requirement that the government has not yet accomplished because it failed twice in securing the ratification of laws creating an autonomous Cordillera region, he said.

Vincent Cabreza, Inquirer Northern Luzon

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McDonald's logo: Home of the Golden Arches

MONDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2007

Across the NATION

A13

Ilocos town plants coconut for coco diesel plant

By Frank Cimatu
Inquirer Northern Luzon

PAGUDPUD, ILOCOS NORTE—Ask former Ilocos Sur Rep. Saliacib Baterina what his Christmas tree is and he will answer: the coconut.

In fact he so loves coconuts that he has initiated coconut planting in a 300-hectare government land in Barangay Caunayan here.

It will indeed be a Christmas windfall in a few years, for the coconuts will feed a \$250-million coco diesel plant to be built either in nearby Pasuquin town or in Currimao town.

Seventy percent of the coco

diesel produced will be exported to Japan starting in 2010, Baterina said.

For the former lawmaker, it will be the fruit of lifelong obsession with coconuts.

He started the Bio-Energy Northern Luzon Inc. (Benline) even when he was congressman. His coconut nursery was located in Sto. Domingo, his hometown, in Ilocos Sur.

"Nobody believed me when I said that I would be planting coconuts across Northern Luzon," he said.

"They said that the conditions in Northern Luzon are different from Southern Luzon where coconuts abound. The weather

here is more arid and defined with one-half of the year dry and the other half rainy. But then we proved them wrong," he said.

His obsession with coconuts rubbed on with the other politicians in the North.

"I didn't know how to plant coconuts until Representative Baterina taught me," said Ilocos Norte Rep. Roque Abian Jr.

Baterina and Abian got investors from Japan as well as the nod of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

In October this year, Benline inked an agreement with the Tokyo-based Pacific Biofides Inc. (PBI) to set up the plantations all over Northern Luzon.

Moriaki Hayashida, PBI president, said Japan would need about 2 million tons of coco biodiesel every year since the Japanese government implemented a 5 percent biodiesel mix in regular diesel.

"The factory we are planning here would be producing 300,000 tons every year starting the end of next year. That volume is only enough for one government ministry in Japan," Hayashida said.

He said they contracted Benline to provide a steady supply of coconuts for the plant.

"Eventually we would be needing 600,000 hectares of coconut plantations for this," he

said. The PBI would be funding the upkeep of these plantations.

Hayashida said they were allotting about \$400 million for the project: \$250 million for the plant and \$150 million for the plantations.

Abian said they convinced the PBI to consider Northern Luzon because it is the nearest to Japan.

"They would be saving at least 60 percent of fuel cost if they locate here," he said.

Abian said they also convinced Ms Arroyo about the project. She ordered Environment Secretary Lito Atienza to provide them with a list of idle government lots in Ilocos Sur,

Cagayan Valley and even Apayo in Cordillera.

So far, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources has identified at least 65,000 hectares of idle lots in those areas.

"In this way, we are not only helping in the government's reforestation project but also in clearing the air of greenhouse gases," said Baterina.

Barangay Caunayan here, for example, is a denuded lot which Benline decided to be its pilot site.

Philippine Coconut Authority regional manager, Dennis Calub, said they would target 2.5 tons of copra per hectare.

Iloilo journalists spend time with women, youth offenders in jail

ILOILO CITY—MEDIA PRACTITIONERS here took time out from news gathering and reporting to spend time with the women and youth offenders at the Iloilo City Bureau of Jail Management and Penology.

For the seventh year, the Iloilo City Hall Press Corps (ICHPC) gathered in making the jailed minors and women feel the warmth of the Yuletide season.

The gift giving activity and Christmas party with the youth inmates is the pet project of reporters covering City Hall.

"We must let them feel the essence of Christmas. Let us not isolate these boys and women (from the community) despite the offenses they committed," said ICHPC president Lydia Pendon.

The ICHPC partied with 57 inmates.

Games, fun, laughter and snacks were shared.

Most of the women inmates face charges for violation of Republic Act No. 9165 or the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002, illegal recruitment, frustrated murder, and other crimes. Theft is common among juvenile inmates.

Giveaways like personal hygiene stuffs and foods were given to each of the inmates courtesy of SM City-Iloilo, Unilever Philippines, Iloilo Korean Youth Association, and officials of the city government. David Israel Sintay, Inquirer Visayas



CHRISTMAS IN ABRA CAPITOL

The Yuletide season is a peaceful time in Abra. Its capitol in Bangue has been decorated with the Nativity scene and Christmas lights.

ELMER DAUNGOY/INQUIRER NORTHERN LUZON

Writer seeks funds to send kids to school

By Vincent Cabreza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—CHARITY IS AGAIN IN vogue this Yuletide, so a motivational book author is using the season to rally his "barkada" in the city to consider spending for the scholarships of 10 million children as their "small acts of heroism."

Lawyer Alexander Lacson, author of the best selling "Small Acts of Heroism: 12 Little Things Every Filipino Can Do To Help the Country," spoke to business management students of the University of the Cordilleras on Saturday to explain the virtues of "good citizenship."

Lacson said Filipinos could aspire for righteous leadership or support the local economy by buying Filipino products.

But he offered them a new initiative, which involves starting scholarship funds for out-of-school youths that would cost them no more than P450 of their monthly allowances.

"If each of us can shell out P450 a

month, one of these 10 million students can go back to school. If we can send five million of the out-of-school children back to school, we would have made a difference," he said.

The initiative need not be expensive, he said.

Some foundations in the country only require less than P500 a month from donors to keep scholarship programs active, Lacson said.

He said there are high school students who have been encouraged by their teachers to help out so they spend P100 each to keep students they do not even know in class, he said.

Lacson, who is secretary general of the political party Ang Kapitiran, said educating everyone is one way of changing the country's fortunes.

He told his audience that Filipinos today suffer "the sins of bad governance," and must exert all efforts to change their lot.

He said everyone "is partly to blame for not doing enough for this country."

He said he was once a victim of racial profiling when he and his wife were stopped by border guards on a trip to Italy.

He blamed the government for putting Filipinos in that position abroad.

Lacson said World Bank archives would show that the Philippines was highly regarded as the best country in Asia 40 years ago, and its people were cited as the region's most respected citizens.

Everything went downhill after the 1960s, however, and four presidents since the 1986 People Power Revolution have not been able to reverse the country's economic and societal deterioration, he said.

Lacson, who also works for a global development organization, said despite the current administration's rosy portrait of the economy, the number of poor families has doubled between 1986 and 2007.

The 10 million out-of-school youths acknowledged by the Department of Education, he said, belong to this sector of society.

in the institution," said Luciano.

Alfonso appeared and sounded anxious at the attention he has been getting.

"Eya pu kekatamu (The money does not belong to us)," he told the INQUIRER when asked why he returned the money.

"They are our guests so they should be treated with respect and honesty," he said.

He said he did not have second thoughts about returning the money.

On duty that night as traffic enforcer, Alfonso gave the money at once to Allan Gil Nicdao, his inspector at the landside operations department, for safekeeping.

Even as he has been working at the DMIA for 12 years, Alfonso has not built a house for himself. He still lives with his parents in Barangay Duquit in Mabalacat town and supports them and his relatives.

His stint at the DMIA is Alfonso's first job after obtaining a business management degree at the Holy Angel University.

Some of his colleagues continued to humor him about the opportunity lost from being honest.

"Manust la mu. Buri da rin ing gewa ku (They're just teasing me. They also appreciated what I did)," he said. Tonette Orejas, Inquirer Central Luzon



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

"We are humbled by the selfless act of one of us, for he has mirrored before the community the culture of honesty, service, integrity and efficiency we are inculcating

NEWSBRIEFS

Poor get food gifts

DIJMAGUETE CITY—The city government here gave packs of foodstuff to about 5,000 poor families on Dec. 20.

Each of the families received from the city government, through the city's social welfare and development office, a package containing rice, sugar, coffee and canned goods in the gift-giving activity held at the Dijmague Public Market Complex.

On Dec. 17, about 3,000 poor children were also treated to a meal by the city government.

City Administrator Dominador Dumlao Jr. said the city government spent almost P1 million for the two projects. The amount, he added was taken from the funds generated during its fiesta and Charter Day celebrations last November.

Romy Amarado, Inquirer Visayas

Cops arrest 5 Manobo folk

COTABATO CITY—Police authorities in Kidapawan City in North Cotabato arrested five armed Manobo who allegedly attacked a police-military outpost on Dec. 19.

Chief Insp. Leo Ajero, Kidapawan City police chief, identified the arrested suspects as Canangaan Labi, 40, of Barangay Balets in Magpet, North Cotabato; Oscar Lamberto Lentija, 27, of Barangay Basak in Magpet; Roy Ladao Anta, 34, of Barangay Ganatan in Arakan, North Cotabato; Nonno Ba Saodo Ocate, 36, of Barangay Badangon in Arakan, and Romeo Sirigas Bantac, 23, of Barangay Salaysay in Marilog District in Davao City.

Ajero said during the attack on the Datu Ingkai outpost, 2Lt. Pedro Peralta, the detachment commander, and a civilian, were wounded.

Edwin O. Fernandez, Inquirer Mindanao

5 hurt in grenade attack

COTABATO CITY—Five people were injured in a grenade attack in Parangalan, Magundan on Dec. 19.

Col. Dickson Hermoso, commander of the Army's 7th Infantry Battalion, believed the attack was politically motivated because the victims were supporters of a mayor candidate.

Hermoso said investigation showed that the explosion was caused by an M-79 projectile fired from Barangay Inug-og in nearby Pikit, Cotabato, where armed followers of an influential politician reside.

Edwin O. Fernandez, Inquirer Mindanao

Job fair in Maasin

MAASIN CITY—A job fair was held in the city Friday, capping this year's employment program of the Department of Labor and Employment's employment program in Eastern Visayas.

Labor regional director Forte Pugo said the job fair was the last of at least 20 such activities conducted in the region in 2007.

More than a hundred jobseekers flocked to the Abgao Covered Court here to seek employment and apply for passport and a National Bureau of Investigation clearance for free.

Jani Arnalz, Inquirer Visayas

A. Echano; 72

BAKAL ALIBA Echano of Daet, Camarines Norte died on Dec. 22 of brain tumor. She was 72 years old. She is survived by sisters Elsa Urbano and Trinidad Madrigal and brother Steve and nephews and nieces.

She was cremated yesterday afternoon at the Loyola Memorial Homes crematorium in Guadalupe, Makati City, after a ceremony honoring her 22 years of service as a practitioner and teacher of meditation at the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University.

Her ashes were brought last night to Daet where another wake will be held in her honor.

SPORTS



JOSEPH Yeo of Sta. Lucia Realty challenges the defense of Talk 'N Text big man Ali Peek. RYAN UMA

Realtors make it five straight

GAMES TOMORROW (Araceli Collante)

3:30 p.m.—Red Bull vs Alaska

5:30 p.m.—Ginibre vs Purefoods

By June Navarro

THE LAST TIME STA. LUCIA REALTY strung up five straight victories, the team went on to win its first and only championship.

Memories of those glorious moments flickered to life last night when the Realtors escaped with a 92-91 squeaker over the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals in the Smart-PBA Philippine Cup at the Cuneta Astrodome.

"That's a good motivation; but in this conference, it will be difficult to accomplish," said Sta. Lucia Realty coach Boyet Fernandez, whose Realtors moved up to 9-6, just half a game behind Red Bull (9-5).

The other hot streak in the league, however, came to a halt as Air21 ended Coca-Cola's marvelous five-game winning run with a 102-97 victory in the other game.

With assistant coach Johnny Tam temporarily calling the shots, the Express threw a stifling full-court press throughout the second half and converted the 23 turnovers of the Tigers into 23 points.

Coach Bo Perasol missed the game as he reportedly went to his hometown General Santos City to attend a pressing family matter.

Arwind Santos tallied 20 points and had 14 rebounds while Rodel De Ocampo added 16 points and 10 boards for the Express, who improved to 6-9 after inking a four-game skid.

Asi Taulava had another monster performance of 23 points and 18 rebounds on the

ninth defeat of the Tigers in 15 games.

Sta. Lucia Realty won five games in a row on the way to ruling the 2001 Governors Cup, the Realtors' only franchise crown since joining the league in 1993.

The winning point came with 16.6 left from Dennis Espino, who split his charities off an Ali Peek foul after a nifty feed by rookie Ryan Reyes inside the paint.

With 2.5 ticks left, the Phone Pals designed one final play that saw Jimmy Alapag driving to the baseline and muffing what looked like an easy layup as time expired.

Alapag's miss deprived Talk 'N Text of a fourth consecutive victory and left the Phone Pals with an 8-7 card.

"Our objective at the start of the conference was to barge into the top 5," said Fernandez. "Now that we're here, I see nothing wrong if we aspire for the top two spots and eventually qualify for an automatic semifinal slot."

The scores:

STA. LUCIA REALTY 92—Williams 22, Reyes 21, Espino 13, Gonzales 11, Aquino 9, Miranda 6, Omolom 4, Yeo 2, Meneses 2, Coronel 0.

TALK 'N TEXT 91—Ritualdo 21, Alecap 20, Washington 16, Peck 12, Allado 10, Aljamal 5, Billones 5, De Ocampo 2, Fernandez 0, Fran 0, Belano 0.

Quarters: 25-16, 42-40, 71-74, 92-91

Second Game

AIR21 102—Santos 20, Canalela 17, De Ocampo 16, Intel 11, Arboleda 11, Se 8, Kramer 6, Chia 5, Sotto 4, Cruz 2, Magumbat 2, Espinas 0.

COCA-COLA 97—Taulava 23, Tolosa 20, Buenafe 15, Durances 9, Cabagnat 7, Toloma 6, Calmaya 6, Dimauangan 4, Call 3, Enrie 2, Arigo 2.

Quarters: 22-26, 47-45, 75-69, 102-97

A breeze for Es Twenty Six

By Musong R. Castillo

CARMONA, CAVITE—OUTSTANDING choice Es Twenty Six exploded from the middle of the pack under Jessie B. Guce yesterday to rule the Grand Presidential Derby pulling away at the San Lazaro Leisure Park here.

The bay filly by Principality out of Play By Ear made her move at the proper time and left everyone fighting for the crumbs to win the P3.6 million top prize, easily the biggest in her career.

"She was really primed for this race," Guce, a multiple stakes race winner, said in Filipino after Es Twenty Six covered the 2,000-meter race in 2 minutes and seven seconds broken down in 24-1/2, 23, 27, 25 and 27 1/2.

It was the third big win for the year for Es Twenty Six, who now looms as a top pick for the Horse of the Year award. She also won the third leg of the Triple Crown series and the Marlo Breeders Cup Fillies race.

The win was also the 11th in 19 overall starts for the Dave dela Cruz-trained filly.

Longshot Legendary won out in the dash for the finish under Patty Dilema for second place worth P1.350 million, while the Antonio Alcasid-steered Henry D' Eight, another far pick, was third a neck behind for P750,000.

Treasured Ack, another filly ridden by John Cordero, was fourth for P300,000.

Second pick Golden Sutter (Jeffryl Zarate) was fifth, while coupled entry Defiant (John Paolo Guce) rallied to clinch sixth

spot. Pound for Pound (R. Hipolito), Pearl Buck (Kelvin Abobo), E.P.'s Magic (Dominador Borbo), Macedonan (R. Mamucod), and Storm Signal (R. Blancaflor) rounded out the order of finish.

Meanwhile, former super horse Real Spicy snapped out of a big slump earlier by ruling the Philracom Year-End Invitational over the highly favored Native Land.

Zarate goaded the Real Quiet out of Spicy Tale son to a one-length win over the Ferdinand Raquel-piloted Native Land, timing 1:40.4 for the mile and virtually ending Native Land's hopes for the Horse of the Year award.

Jet Sutter, mounted by ace Jonathan Hernandez, was third about three lengths off, with Vivero, who was handled by Louie D. Balboa, checking in fourth.

**Race 1—Orbit/Vir—Enjoyable (2),
Pochi/Sky Pansy (3), Kalmie (5),
Race 2—Penta/Orbit—Awesome
Buddy (3), Look Who's Play-
ing (6), Rosalie Janda (7),
Blue Iris (4), Styx Girl (5),
Race 3—Orbit/Vir—Prinnie For Now (2), El Bangero (3), Macash (2), Foto
You Arts (1)
Race 4—Orbit—Dynamic Jason (8), Pinkeleugo (2), Condor's Entry (5),
Worth It/Wink/Shakespeare (15)
Race 5—Orbit—Angela Star (3), Speedy Kim (9), Gray Magic (6), Golden
Square (8)
Race 6—Penta/Orbit—Without Warning (1), Holy King (3), Sir Guyup (4),
Private Fender/Praeven (7), Cresce Fun (2)
Race 7—Penta/Orbit—When We're Playing (6), Olive Tan (4), E.J. Forever (1),
Imperial Decision (2), Colombo Breeze (7)
Race 8—Penta/Orbit—Francesca (1), Egg's Gold (4), Yo Tero (2), Cool
Unicorn (8), Detective David (1)
Race 9—Penta/Orbit—Car France (3), Jolly Joe (5), Personal Ple (9), So
Gorgeous (10), Easy Lover (11)
Race 10—Orbit—Sir Belmore (8), Nirvana (7), You Got It All (2), Precious
Metal (3)
Race 11—Orbit—Sambar (4), Pole (3), Lord Elgine (8), Karma (1), Boot
Legs (2)
Race 12—Super 80/Vir—Blackline (3), Jewellmer (12), King View (9), Gor-
geous Sand (8), Head Turner (9), My Only One (1)**



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DID YOU KNOW

ON DEC. 24, 1941, President Manuel L. Quezon and Vice President Sergio Osmeña left the seat of government in Manila after Japanese forces attacked different Philippine cities. Together with American General Douglas MacArthur, the two departed for better-defended Corregidor, intending to transfer the seat of power there.

Cyril L. Bonabene, Inquirer Research

POLICE RAID ON STL FRANCHISE HOLDER'S OFFICE

Mayor, 3 execs cleared of raps

By Jeannette I. Andrade

THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN HAS cleared Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte and three other local officials of the charges of grave misconduct and oppression filed against them by a company which was given the franchise to operate small town lottery in the area.

In a 14-page decision, the Ombudsman said that Belmonte, business permits and licensing office officer in charge Pacífico Maghacot Jr., Office of the Assistant City Administrator consultant Rodolfo Dimasip and former Quezon City Police District director Chief Supt. Nicasio Radovan acted in good faith when they arrested officials and employees of Benchmark Acquisition International Corp. during a raid on March 25, 2006.

A total of 63 collectors and operators were rounded up when the police raided the STL head office on East Avenue and three of its outlets in the city. Five Benchmark officials were invited for questioning but were released after a few hours.

Those arrested were later charged with violation of Presidential Decree 1602 or the anti-illegal gambling law and city ordinance SP 91 for operating without a mayor's permit.

According to the Ombudsman, Belmonte's order for the conduct of the raid "appeared regular, reasonable and consistent with the ambit of his power under the local government where in this respect, government officials are presumed to perform their functions with regularity and strong evidence."

Belmonte had insisted that he was against the illegal numbers game, adding that STL is another form of "jueteng" which has no place in the city.

In dismissing the case against Maghacot, Dimasip and Radovan, the Ombudsman said that the officials were merely following Belmonte's order which appeared "reasonable, lawful and within the authority" of the local chief executive.

Man kills boy, injures 2 men

By Allison W. Lopez

A 7-YEAR OLD BOY WAS KILLED WHILE two men were injured when a man reportedly high on drugs went on a shooting rampage in Tondo, Manila, Saturday night.

Jeric Palma Pineda, a student of the Magat Salamat Elementary School and a resident of Kasipagan Street in Moriones, Tondo, died while being treated at the Mary Johnston Hospital for a gunshot wound in the collarbone.

Injured were Jose Mario de la Cruz, 37, a freelance salesman who was shot in the back and Alfredo Abac, 47, who was hit in the arm. The victims and the suspect, Eduardo Santos Jr., were neighbors. Santos, 30, immediately escaped after the incident.

According to PO2 Rommel del Rosario of the Manila Police District's Homicide Division, Pineda's father was drinking with his neighbors when Santos passed by. One of those drinking, Ronulito Legada, told the police that he invited the suspect to join them.

Legada added that Santos, who seemed high on drugs, later started showing off his gun and then, without any warning, fired at the people around him.

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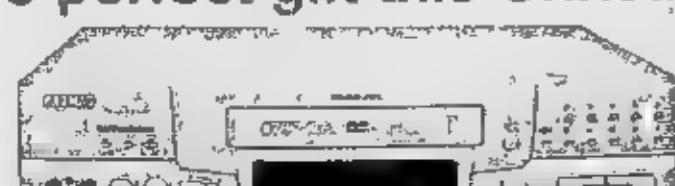
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Neighborhood store starts a holiday tradition

By Prosy B. Montesines
Contributor

THESE DAYS, IT IS NOT UNUSUAL to see a crowd in front of the tiny and obscure Domalaon Bakery on the corner of San Jose and Sumulong Circle streets in Antipolo City.

Curious motorists and pedestrians who are not familiar with the place soon find out that the people just want to buy a particular kind of *monoy* from the store.

What makes the bread—in eye-catching animal shapes—a crowd draw?

Holiday treats

Bakery owner Zenaida Domalaon said her customers have made these animal-shaped breads part of their *Noche Buena* (Christmas Eve dinner) and *Media Noche* (New Year's Eve feast) fare.

Named after the real thing, Domalaon's *lechon de leche*—light brown and crusty on the outside and soft and chewy on the inside—is a bestseller because most customers use it as a centerpiece on the dinner table.

"It is a cheaper substitute for roasted suckling pig," she said in jest. "The biggest *lechon*, which is the same size as the real thing, costs only P150 and the smaller ones, from P10 to P50 apiece."

Because of the high demand during the holiday season, large-size animal breads are



BAKERY owner Zenaida Domalaon and her baker, Jun Orong, show their holiday bestsellers: The lechon de leche and buwaya.

PHOTOS BY ROGER CARPIO

available only by order placed at least three days in advance. Domalaon has hired extra labor working 24 hours a day in two shifts to cope with the numerous orders.

Another bestseller is her crocodile bread popularly called buwaya, a hit among kids who like to boast that they eat crocodiles for breakfast.

Some of Domalaon's customers have started the tradition of giving the lechon de

leche, *buwaya* and *pagong* (turtle) as gifts to symbolize their wish for the receiver.

The pig, for instance, symbolizes thrift and prosperity; the crocodile, strength and stability of emotions; and the turtle, adaptability and new opportunities.



WHEN given as a gift, the turtle-shaped bread (left) signifies adaptability and new opportunities. The octopus-shaped bread (right) is another favorite among bakery customers.

PHOTO BY ROGER CARPIO

The idea of making animal-shaped breads came about when Domalaon's eldest son, Ramil, was working as a baker for an aunt in Tanay, Rizal. A *balikbayan* relative who came to see Ramil tried to sculpt a crocodile from a lump of dough. Pleased with the result, Ramil experimented with other animal shapes with success.

At that time, Zenaida was working in Kuwait. Convinced that a *sari sari* and bakery store would be a wise investment, she asked Ramil and her other children, Clarissa, Charina and Roel, to put up one in a rented place in Antipolo City.

A big hit

They bought an oven, a roller machine, trays and other baking equipment with her dollar remittances. Their bakery products, especially the *pan de sal*, *monoy* and animal bread, soon

clicked with the neighbors.

"When I came back in 2002, I was surprised at the number of customers not only from the neighborhood but also from other places. I felt happy that my children had used my savings well," Domalaon said.

She decided to stay in the country for good to help run the store. Ramil, who had gotten married, soon moved out and opened another bakery in Taytay, Rizal.

Before branching out, Ramil trained a relative, 21-year-old Jun Orong, as his replacement. Today, Jun and other helpers make no less than 3,000 pieces of *pan de sal* a day and hundreds of other specialties, including the animal breads, cheese balls and pizza.

"Not a few bakeries have attempted to duplicate our prod-



Al-Qaida group confirms death of top figure

DUBAI—AN AL QAIDA-LINKED group in Iraq has confirmed the death of Abu Maysara, a top operative who the US military said was killed in a clash last month, according to a recording posted on the Web on Saturday.

Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, leader of the Islamic State in Iraq, hailed Maysara as "a martyr

who was a scholar and a mujahid (holy war fighter)," on the audio tape posted on Islamist websites.

The US military said earlier in December that Maysara, a Syrian, was among nine senior al-Qaida members killed in November. It described him as an adviser to Baghdadi, also

known as Abu Ayyub al-Masri, and his slain predecessor Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

Baghdadi called on insurgents to keep fighting during the current Eid al-Adha feast, when Muslims sacrifice animals.

"May God accept your sacrifice, and may they be the apostles of the Awakening Councils, who are servants of the Crusaders," Baghdadi said, referring to US-backed neighborhood patrols who fight insurgents.

An increase in US troops, more efficient Iraqi security forces and neighborhood patrols organized by mainly Sunni

Arab tribes have been credited for a decline in violence and a fall in civilian and US military casualties in the past two months.

The tape's authenticity could not be verified but was posted on a main Islamist website often used by insurgent groups and the speaker sounded like earlier

recordings of Baghdadi.

While the Iraq wing of al-Qaida remains at the forefront of many groups fighting US forces and the Shiite-led government supported by Washington, its fighters have faced growing opposition in the Sunni areas of Iraq where they operate.

Reuters

Former British PM Blair converts to Catholicism

LONDON—FORMER BRITISH PRIME Minister Tony Blair has become a Roman Catholic, church officials said on Saturday, ending widespread speculation that he would switch to the faith of his wife and four children.

But as Catholic leaders welcomed Blair into the fold, immediate questions were raised about whether the 54-year-old had now renounced his liberal views on contentious areas like abortion, gay rights and stem-cell research.

A spokesperson for the leader of the Catholic Church in England and Wales, Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, said Blair had been "received into full communion with the Catholic Church" at a private Mass on Friday night.

Murphy O'Connor, who took the

ceremony, praised the conversion of Blair, now the international community's special envoy to the Middle East.

"For a long time, he has been a regular worshipper at Mass with his family and in recent months he has been following a program of formation to prepare for his reception into full communion," he said.

"My prayers are with him, his wife and family at this joyful moment in their journey of faith together," Vatican spokesperson Frederico Lombardi added. "Catholics are glad to welcome into their community someone who has followed a serious and reflective path towards Catholicism." The leader of the worldwide Anglican communion, Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, also wished Blair well.

Blair's conversion from Anglicanism had been expected for a long time.

He regularly attended Catholic Mass alongside his wife Cherie, a life-long Catholic, while prime minister and only attended Anglican services on state occasions.

One of his last acts as premier was to visit Pope Benedict XVI at the Vatican, fueling speculation that a switch was imminent.

But converting earlier could have been tricky, because of his role in peace talks between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, his government's legislation on same-sex partnerships and his role appointing Church of England bishops.

His former press chief, Alastair Campbell—who once told journalists

"we don't do God" when Blair was asked about religion—told BBC television: "His faith does matter an awful lot to him as people who've worked with him, those who have known him, they've known that for some time."

"And it's something that I suspect he probably felt he couldn't do as prime minister; he's done it now." There is no legal or constitutional bar to a Catholic being British prime minister although there has never been a Catholic premier.

Some commentators suggest that Blair will struggle to reconcile his Catholic faith with certain political decisions taken by his government such as allowing same-sex couples to enter into legally recognized civil partnerships.



POPE Benedict XVI poses with Britain's then outgoing Prime Minister Tony Blair (right) during their private audience at the Vatican on June 23.

AFP

CIA obstructed 9/11 investigators, says report

WASHINGTON—THE CIA OBSTRUCTED an official US commission investigating the Sept. 11 attacks by withholding tapes of interrogations of al-Qaeda operatives, according to former panel members quoted in a report on Saturday.

A review of documents by former members of the 9/11 commission revealed the panel made repeated, detailed requests to the spy agency in 2003 and 2004 for information about the interrogation of members of

the extremist network but were never notified of the tapes, the New York Times reported.

The review of the commission's correspondence with the Central Intelligence Agency came after the agency earlier this month revealed it had destroyed videotapes in 2005 that showed harsh interrogations of two al-Qaeda members.

The review, written up in a memo prepared by Philip Zelikow, the former executive di-

rector of the 9/11 commission, said that "further investigation is needed" to resolve whether the CIA's failure to hand over the tapes violated federal law.

The memorandum does not assert that withholding the tapes was illegal but states that federal law penalizes anyone who "knowingly and willfully" withholds or "covers up" a "material fact" from a federal inquiry, the newspaper said.

The revelation adds to pres-

sure on President George W. Bush's administration, already under fire over the affair by human rights groups and lawmakers who allege it has tried to cover up proof of torture.

The CIA responded that the panel never specifically asked for interrogation videos.

CIA spokesperson Mark Mansfield told AFP the agency had gone to "great lengths" to satisfy the panel's requests, and that commission members had

been provided with details from interrogations of detainees.

"The 9/11 Commission certainly had access to, and drew from, detailed information that had been provided by terrorist detainees. That's how they reconstructed the plot in their comprehensive report," he said.

"Because it was thought the commission could ask about tapes at some point, they were not destroyed while the commission was active."

AFP

Hoover wanted thousands arrested

WASHINGTON—FORMER FBI director J. Edgar Hoover proposed imprisoning 12,000 Americans in 1950 and suspending their right to habeas corpus because they were "potentially dangerous," the New York Times reported on Sunday.

Hoover, who ran the top law-enforcement agency for decades, presented his plan to President Harry Truman 12 days after the start of the Korean War in a letter to a top White House national security aide, according to newly declassified documents cited by the Times.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation chief wrote that his agency would use a "master warrant" to "apprehend all individuals potentially dangerous" to national security based on an index of names compiled for years.

Hoover suggested Truman justify the mass jailing "to protect the country against treason, espionage and sabotage," said the declassified letter, which was posted on the newspaper's website.

There was no sign that Truman or his successor in the White House, Dwight Eisenhower, endorsed any aspect of Hoover's plan.

Since his death in 1972, historians have portrayed Hoover as having often abused his authority, violated civil liberties and overstated the threat of subversion.

His proposal for mass arrests in 1950 included suspending habeas corpus, or the right of detainees to challenge the legality of their imprisonment.

The principle, which dates back centuries, is enshrined in the US Constitution but has become the subject of debate in recent legal battles over the detention of suspects held as part of the US "war on terror."

AFP



A SALVAGE barge lifts a specially designed basket containing the wreck of the 800-year-old merchant ship "Nanhai No. 1" from the waters off China's Guangdong province on Friday, Dec. 21.

800-year-old ship raised from China Sea

BELIJING—A MERCHANT ship loaded with porcelain and other antiquities that sank off China's south coast 800 years ago was raised from the bottom of the sea, state media reported on Saturday.

Archaeologists built a large steel basket around the 30-

meter-long (99-foot-long) ship, which was raised by a crane on Friday during a two-hour operation, Xinhua news agency reported.

Discovered in 1987 off the coast of Guangdong province, the so-called South China Sea No. 1 ship was recognized as

one of the oldest and largest merchant boats sunk in China, the report said.

Archaeologists have recovered more than 4,000 containers made of gold, silver and porcelain as well as about 6,000 copper coins of the Song Dynasty (960-1279),

when the boat was built.

They estimated there were still 60,000 to 80,000 items on board.

The recovery of the boat is an important milestone for the study of porcelain in ancient China, archaeologists said.

AFP

Risks of cholesterol drug not fully revealed

NEW EVIDENCE SHOWS THAT drugmakers Merck and Schering-Plough have conducted several studies of their popular cholesterol medicine Zetia that raise questions about its risks to the liver, but the companies have never published those results.

Partial results of the studies, alluded to in documents on the Food and Drug Administration's

website, raise questions about whether Zetia can cause liver damage when used long term with other cholesterol drugs called statins.

Most of the millions of people who use Zetia take it along with a statin like Lipitor, Crestor or Zocor. Or they take it in a single pill, Vytorin, that combines Zetia with Zocor.

The discovery of the unpub-

lished research comes as Merck and Schering are already under criticism for not yet releasing data from an important Zetia study, called Enhance, that they completed early last year.

The Enhance data may also contain important information about Zetia's liver risks. At least some patients were dropped from the Enhance study after testing revealed that they had

elevated liver enzymes, a Schering-Plough spokesperson confirmed this week.

But a full report on that trial, including the number of patients who had liver problems, will not be available until March.

Doctors say that by failing to disclose promptly all their research, Merck and Schering-Plough may be leaving the pub-

lic with a misleadingly favorable view of Zetia's safety and benefits.

"You don't want to have data missing," said Dr. Bruce Psaty, a professor of medicine and epidemiology at the University of Washington. "When there have been adverse effects, when the benefits don't look impressive, those are the trials that historically don't make it to press."

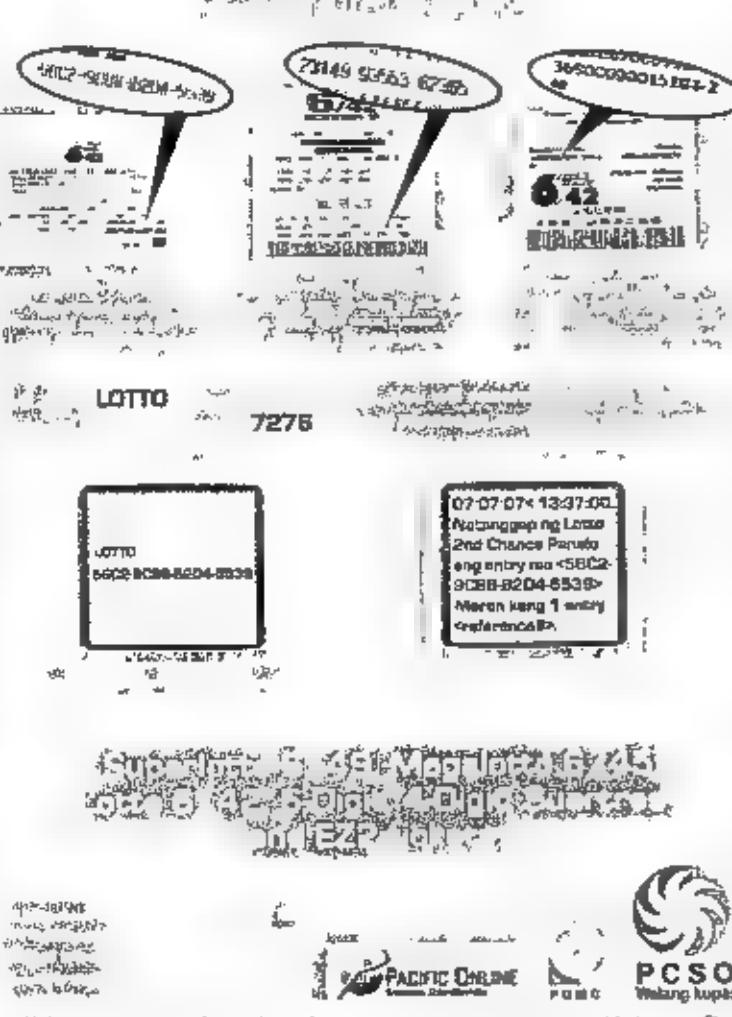
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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Pro-Thaksin party claims victory in Thai elections

BANGKOK—ALLIES OF DEPOSED PREMIER Thaksin Shinawatra took a strong lead in Thailand's general elections on Sunday, according to exit polls, returning the self-made billionaire to the center of Thai politics.

The pro-Thaksin People Power Party (PPP) quickly announced that it would begin forming a coalition government, after two exit polls showed it had a healthy lead over its nearest rival, the Democrat Party.

"It will definitely be a coalition government. We will discuss with the parties who have similar policy platforms to us," PPP's secretary general Surapong Suebwongsee said.

The results were a repudiation of the military's relentless efforts to wipe out Thaksin's political influence, 15 months after the gen-

erals seized power in a bloodless coup, an analyst said.

"The results underlined that people still support Thaksin and want him to come back," said Uknit Pathmanand, a professor of political science at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University. "It also showed that Thaksin was still popular, especially among people living in northeastern provinces." The exit polls gave PPP at least 58 seats more than its nearest rival, the Democrat Party.

Election authorities planned to release unofficial results by midnight, but Democrat leader Abhisit



THAKSIN

Vejjajiva said he would not dispute the PPP's right to form a coalition.

"So now we are in second place, and forming a coalition government is for the one that got the most," he told reporters, but later added they were still waiting

for the official results.

PPP appeared to come out ahead in the polls, even though one third of the country, including Thaksin's rural strongholds, are still under martial law.

Army-backed Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont insisted the polls were fair, and PPP leader Samak Sundaravej said Sunday that he believed election authorities had dealt with the party even-handedly so far.

Thaksin has not returned to Thailand since the coup, living instead in self-imposed exile in Britain, where he bought the Manchester City Football Club.

The junta dissolved Thaksin's Tha Rak Thai (Thais Love Thais) party and banned him from political office, but the man who made a fortune in telecoms has remained a dominant and divisive figure in Thai politics. APP

Pakistan nabs blast suspects

PESHAWAR—SEVERAL SUSPECTS were arrested in the suicide bombing that killed 56 people in Pakistan but missed the target, a close ally of President Pervez Musharraf, security officials said on Saturday.

The announcement came as grisly new details emerged about the attack, which saw the bomber pack his suicide vest with ball bearings to inflict as many casualties as possible.

Friday's bombing, one of the worst suicide attacks in Pakistan's troubled history, targeted Musharraf's former interior minister Aftab Sherpa, who led a government crackdown on Islamic militants.

"We have arrested several people," said one of the officials, who asked not to be named. "We have made important progress in the investigation and we hope to hunt down culprits."

The attack was condemned by the United Nations and the United States, which counts Musharraf as a pivotal ally in its "war on terror" campaign against Islamic militancy.

The carnage has raised fears of more bloodshed in the run-up to the Jan. 8 parliamentary elections—which are already under intense international scrutiny after allegations Musharraf's allies will try to rig the ballot.

Police said on Saturday they had found two severed legs believed to be those of the suicide bomber, and that they were conducting DNA tests.

Oxford-educated and movie-star handsome. The other is aging, acid-tongued and a veteran of rough and tumble politics.

One of these starkly contrasting men is likely to emerge as Thailand's next prime minister after parliamentary elections on Sunday, which will restore democracy after 15 months of military-led rule.

Samak Sundaravej, the 72-year-old veteran, is an ultra-right-winger who heads the People's Power Party. His earthy, shoot-from-the-hip style is popular with some in the working class, though less so with analysts and the media.

"Samak is acerbic, belligerent, polarizing and divisive," says Thitinan Pongsudhirak, a political scientist at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok. "He is not very appealing."

His opponent, Abhisit Vejjajiva, the 43-year-old head of the liberal Democrat Party, has other shortcomings. Born and educated in England, in the hallowed halls of Eton and Oxford, he is out of touch with regular people and downright boring, some experts say.

"He is well equipped on paper but he has not been able to connect to the grass roots," Thitinan said. "He has not been able to widen and broaden his appeal to become a national candidate for prime minister."

Most polls show that Samak's



SAMAK

People's Power Party will win the most seats but fall short of a majority in the 480-seat parliament.

Typically, the leader of the winning party forms a government with coalition partners and takes the premiership. However, some experts see another likely scenario: smaller parties joining forces with the Democrats, paving the way for Abhisit to rise to the top post.

Samak is the torchbearer for Thaksin Shinawatra, the billionaire businessman who was ousted as prime minister in a bloodless coup in September 2006. He lives in self-imposed exile in London, in part because he would face corruption charges if he returned.

The People's Power Party is made up mostly of Thaksin's old supporters, though Samak himself is new to the Thaksin team.

"I don't have to talk much about policies, because the whole country knows what the



ABHISIT

policies of our party are," Samak said in an interview with The Associated Press.

As prime minister from 2001 to 2006, Thaksin launched programs to help Thailand's poor rural areas, including low-interest loans, virtually free medical care and village development projects.

"Thaksin did good things for the country for five years and the whole country knows it," Samak said.

Samak, known as a cat lover and passionate cook, carries some serious political baggage.

He is still remembered for allegedly stirring up right wing mobs that killed leftist student activists in 1976. Now, he faces corruption charges related to the purchase of fire trucks and bidding on a sewage project during his term as Bangkok mayor.

His opponent has been a shining star since he entered politics at the age of 27.

AP

Scientists fine-tune tsunami warning system

BERLIN—AS THE THIRD ANNIVERSARY of the Asian tsunami nears, German scientists say they are working hard to honor a promise made to Indonesia to create an Indian Ocean alert system to prevent a repeat of the 2004 tragedy.

"The aim is to be able to send out an alert within 10 minutes of the earthquake that sets off the giant waves and to save lives," said Joern Lauterburg of Germany's national research center for geoscience (GFZ) in Potsdam outside Berlin.

The offer to develop a complex quake measuring system with sensors on land and the seabed relaying information via satellite to remote computers, was made three weeks after the tsunami killed some 220,000 people along the Indian Ocean shoreline on Dec. 26, 2004.

The government of Indonesia, which bore the brunt of the killer waves, immediately accepted and 120 German experts went to work on a project named the German Contribu-

tion to the Tsunami Early Warning System for the Indian Ocean (GITEWS).

Three years later, the mission is almost accomplished and the researchers hope to have the system up and running in November 2008.

Since early 2005, the German team has worked with Indonesian, American and Japanese crews on setting up 160 seismic measuring stations on land and anchoring 23 sensors to the ocean bed.

The seabed sensors are vital to the system's success because the instruments on land cannot give scientists a picture of how the earth's plates have been deformed below the sea by a quake.

"The land sensors are not enough because they do not enable us to know how an earthquake has damaged the seabed. It is only if there is a vertical deformation that the seism will be followed by a tsunami," Lauterburg said.

In 2004, he explained, the strongest earthquake ever

recorded in this region pushed the earth's crust upwards by 15 centimeters with a violent jolt that triggered the tsunami.

The underwater sensors are cast into the waves attached to weights to make them sink more than 5 kilometers to the ocean floor.

They can measure the pressure of the water mass above them, and therefore its height. This means that any sudden variation in sea level is detected and used to predict the formation of giant waves.

The sensors carry out measurements every 15 seconds and relay the information to a buoy which sends the information to Jakarta via satellite.

If a quake is detected and at the same time the seabed monitors measure abnormal water pressure, another complex part of the warning system kicks in, as the GFZ's technology seeks to predict where and when the tsunami will strike the coast.

"These calculations unfortunately take a long time because,

since the seabed is not even, the range of variables to be taken into account is vast. We have therefore developed models of potential trajectories to save our computers time," Lauterburg said.

The system had what his team described as a "baptism of fire" in September when an 8.4-magnitude earthquake struck off the west coast of Indonesia's Sumatra island. It measured the size and location of the seismic within a record five minutes.

This enabled the scientists at Potsdam to raise the alert to Indonesian authorities more than 10 minutes earlier than the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre in Hawaii.

It is a big step forward in a field where mere minutes can mean the difference between life and death for people in the path of a tsunami, the GFZ's Joachim Zschau said.

It takes 10 to 20 minutes from the time a seabed earthquake happens for a tsunami to hit the coast.

AP



WHAT'S INSIDE

■ Hot Yi steers
Bucks past
Bobcats /A24

SPORTS

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Cebu overwhelms Manila, puts away baseball crown

By Marc Anthony Reyes

CEBU BATTERED FIVE MANILA PITCHERS for 23 hits and turned the rubber match for the Baseball Philippines Series 2 championship into an unexpected 20-5 rout yesterday at the Rizal Memorial ball park.

The Dolphins, fourth placers in the pilot series, opened an 18-1 lead on top of the sixth that should have ended the one-sided match, except that the 10-run mercy rule was not applied in the best-of-three title series.

"It's the offense that did it," said Cebu team manager Isaac Bacarisas in the midst of his boys' celebration in the muddy midfield. "Lahat ng initagay ko, tu-matama, pati reserba (Everyone I put in made a hit, even the reserves)."

Jose Castro went to work on top of the

fourth and surrendered four runs before Cebu went to town with a nine-hit, nine-run spree off Mike Natividad in the sixth inning for that 18-1 lead.

Southpaw Joseph Orillana, who won the opener for Cebu, 6-3, on a three-hitter, claimed the win and the Series 2 MVP Award. He scattered 12 hits and struck out four a day after the Dolphins dropped a close 9-8 decision in Game 2 that extended the playoffs.

Manila started ace pitcher Charlie Labrador, who yielded seven hits and five runs in the first two and 2/3 innings.

Romeo Jasmin, the Game 2 winner, took over and lasted only one and 2/3 innings after giving up four hits, including a three-run single by Bacarisas.

Jose Castro went to work on top of the

fourth and surrendered four runs before Cebu went to town with a nine-hit, nine-run spree off Mike Natividad in the sixth inning for that 18-1 lead.

Even actor Richard Gomez, a Cebu third stringer, added fire to the rout as he belted a one-run triple in that explosive sixth (See related story on A23).

"I put in five pitchers but no one was able to stop their hitters," said Manila team manager Joel Palanog, who even tapped seldom-used Richard Landicho to close the match.

The small crowd, which included reigning IBF flyweight champ Nonito Donaire, erupted in cheers after Manila's Larry Icham popped an easy fly for the third out that mercifully stopped the carnage.



JON De Ubago beats the throw to Manila Sharks catcher Romel Roja and scores in a nine-run spurge by the Cebu Dolphins in the sixth inning.

RODEL ROTONI

The Sharks unleashed a four-run spurge later in the inning but that hardly made any difference.

As MVP for the season and the title series, Orillana received the Emilio "Jun" Bernardino trophy, named after the late PBA commissioner.

Orillana, Labrador and four other mainstays of Cebu and Manila missed Game 2 to join their teammates who re-

ceived their cash incentives from President Macapagal-Arroyo the other day as silver medalists in the recent Southeast Asian Games behind Thailand.

The league, organized by Community Sports Inc., will resume on March 23 next year with a record field of eight teams.

Linescores

CEBU 141 308 002—20 23 8

MANILA 001 004 000—5 12 2



Harbour Centre seals title duel with Hapee

By Jasmine W. Payo

HARBOUR CENTRE STARTED HOT AND then coasted past San Mig Coffee, 79-67, to clinch the last PBL championship berth yesterday at the Rizal Memorial Coliseum.

With the La Salle duo of Rico Maierhofer and TY Tang dominating anew, Batang Pier arranged a best-of-three championship showdown with the unbeaten Hapee Toothpaste in the V-Go Extreme Energy Drink Cup starting Thursday.

"Our fluid motion went back to its place," said coach Jorge Gallent after Batang Pier prevailed in the Game 3 semifinal decider.

Gallent said he hopes Batang Pier would sustain the momentum in their bid for an unprecedented fourth straight crown against Hapee squad riding high on an 11-game winning streak.

"We have to practice our transition de-

HARBOUR Centre big man Rico Maierhofer collars the rebound off San Mig Coffee's Jerby del Rosario in yesterday's PBL rubber match at the Rizal Coliseum. INQUIRER PHOTOMODEL ROTONI

GAMES THURSDAY
(Rizal Coliseum)
2 p.m.—San Mig
vs Toyota Balintawak
(Knockout for 3rd)
4 p.m.—Hapee
vs Harbour Centre
(Game 1-Finals)

fense since Hapee is a running team," he said.

But its Batang Pier's early scoring charge anchored on Tang, who shot nine of his 14 points in the first period, that set the tempo for the rout.

Coming from an all-around Game 2 performance, Maierhofer then took over in the next canto as Batang Pier went on to lead by as many as 27 points, 64-37, in the second half.

"We also started playing good defense in the second quarter," said Gallent, whose big men held 6-foot-8 Nigerian Sam Ekwe to just a bucket at halftime.

Maierhofer posted his third straight semifinal double-double with 19 points and 12 rebounds, while Tang finished with 14.

Hapee claimed the first title slot after sweeping Toyota Balintawak, 2-0, in their own semifinal encounter.

San Mig Coffee threatened to end Har-

bour Centre's three-conference reign with an 80-72 victory in the series opener, before Batang Pier forged the Game 2 equalizer, 82-77, last Saturday.

Bonbon Custodio paced the Coffee Kings with 25 points, but unlike in previous games, new San Beda recruits Pong Escobal and Ekwe hardly made an impact.

Batang Pier typified their superiority by draining nine of their first 11 points from beyond the arc in the third period for a 54-33 bubble.

The Coffee Kings, though, recovered from their stupor in the final quarter with a 12-2 run that trimmed the lead to 66-52, but a Gallent timeout quickly put things back in order for Batang Pier, who led, 70-52, heading into the final three minutes.

The scores:

HARBOUR CENTRE 79—Maierhofer 19, Tang 14, Varaga 9, Gonzales 8, Mercado 8, Gaco 6, Malabanan 5, Tayor 4, Ababou 3, Asoro 2.

SAN MIG COFFEE 67—Custodio 25, Pascual 12, Ekwe 11, Bulocan 7, Dela Pena 6, Escobal 2, Rafeles 2, Del Rosario 2, Menor 0, Juanzon 0, Sorongan 0, Angeles 0, Saidua 0.

Quarters: 24-15, 43-26, 64-40, 79-67

Futsal bronze shines like gold

By Jasmine W. Payo

IN THE GROWING SPORT OF FUTSAL, a bunch of athletes recently turned garbage into, well, bronze. Literally.

In fact, the members of the Philippine women's futsal team will be the first to tell you that the bronze medal that adorned each member's neck at the end of the 24th Southeast Asian Games in Thailand recently was dug from trash cans and piles of refuse.

So don't blame them if they see a golden shine in their medals.

"Futsal is a relatively new sport, so there wasn't any money for this team," said goalkeeper and co-captain Tiffany Batungbacal. "When the coaches told us there won't be any money, we all decided that we could do it on our own."

To address the question of financing the team's participation in the biennial meet, in a sport inserted on the roster specifically to boost Thailand's gold medal machine, the team had a simple game plan. sell newspapers, bottles, ink cartridges and old clothes.

"We collected them from our families, friends, colleagues and offices," said Batungbacal. "We actually got stuff from

garbage cans in Ateneo and also at the University of Asia and the Pacific."

Team members also organized futsal clinics and tournaments and held raffles, solicitations, events and garage sales.

"It was a choice that we made after thinking long and hard of the sacrifices we needed to undertake as national athletes," winger Carla Isabel Paredes said.

No budget for the team

"Part of these sacrifices was the money we needed to raise to fund the participation fee for the SEA Games. The PSC (Philippine Sports Commission) informed us that there was no budget for our team. So we left no stone unturned in order to raise funds."

And it was a reality that team members understood since futsal—an indoor version of football where each team fields in five players on court—is still perceived as a novel sport in the country.

"Sometimes you really have to prove yourself first before sponsors come in," said Manny Batungbacal, team coach and Tiffany's husband.

"In fairness to the PSC, they didn't have any budget also," said Batungbacal.

"We're a relatively new sport and it's

harder to gamble on us compared to boxing and all the other popular sports."

But with funds still short a week before the SEA Games, the couple decided to sell their car.

"We've been really planning to sell it," shared Batungbacal. "Days before we left for Thailand, we still lacked P250,000 and we sold the car for P220,000. But we had no regrets at all."

Despite the off-court difficulties, the squad never lost its focus on the game.

"We knew our weakness—speed, strength and core," said Batungbacal. "Our coaches did their homework; they did their strategies and plays. The team was open enough to re-learn things."

Understanding each other

The 14-member squad, composed mostly of former soccer players, is also relatively old—in sports years, at least—with an average age of 27.

"We're not the strongest, biggest and fastest, but we really worked hard," said Batungbacal. "We understood each other and that really helped. We've been together for two and a half years. That's one of the things that gave us the edge."

In their bronze medal match against



FROM GARBAGE TO GOLD: Members of the RP team pose for posterity at their recent thanksgiving party. Seated from left: Farrahbeth Limbo, Tiffany Batungbacal, Glaiza Artus, Sheila Ninoba, Francine Ruffy, Ria Tanjanco and Krishna Javier; (standing, same order) Under-19 RP coach Joel Villarino, coach Manny Batungbacal, players Glenda Bascon, Carla Paredes and Simonette Gaspar, assistant coach Paul Encarnacion and Loyola Schools PE director Alex Torres.

INQUIRER PHOTOMODEL RONIE JESUS ORBEA

Everybody was selfless."

With the feat, good news started trickling in, including a guarantee that the PSC will reimburse the squad's expenses.

"This isn't a perfect team," said Batungbacal. "We had our fights. But at the end of the day, we played for our country, for the people who believed in us and for each other in the team."

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Ginebra calling in Big J on Christmas day?

THERE ARE TWO REASONS WHY the Philippine Basketball Association is coming up with a two-game package tomorrow, Christmas Day.

1) The PBA obviously feels the duty to celebrate, so it's throwing out a two-game party.

2) The PBA wants to join Malacañang in offering something special to millions of Filipino overseas workers who are here to spend Christmas with their loved ones.

It's no secret that the PBA, together with Manny Pacquiao, has remained a top favorite among sports-loving Pinoys abroad.

Asia's first play-for-pay cage league is still tops on the list of our homesick countrymen.

So one sure hit of a gift for these hardworking heroes of the RP economy is to treat them to live PBA action at the Araneta Coliseum on Christmas Day.

No, the main gift, in this case,

won't come in wrapped.

It's a sure thriller, assured the PBA media bureau, so there's no reason to call it a surprise package anymore.

The Dec. 25 schedule reads:

3 p.m.—Red Bull vs Alaska

5:20 p.m.—Ginebra vs Purefoods

Anyway, the countless *balikbayans* who have gone gaga over the Big J and Barangay Ginebra would not be glad to see that their favorite outfit, the defending conference titlist, has been blowing hot and cold.

In fact, Ginebra, which had figured in uncharacteristic fold-ups, squandering double-digit leads in at least five outings, lost its game last Friday and dropped to 9-6.

Now, against league-leading Purefoods, the Kings will have to go out of their way, beg the Big J to lend them the fabled never-say-die spirit in the Christmas Day mainer, to keep their wild-card chances alive.

BARE EYE



Recab Trinidad

With their respective credentials, the Red Bull-Alaska opening encounter on Christmas Day should pack all the sparks and thrills fit to put *balikbayans* and home fans at the edge of their seats.

Continues an advice from the PBA media bureau:

"Purefoods, with its 11-3 slate, is assured of a slot in the semifinals. Red Bull, Alaska, Talk N Text, Sta. Lucia are hotly disputing the second semifinal seat. The top two teams gain automatic semifinal slots. The 3rd, 4th, 5th teams move on to the

quarterfinals, while the 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th teams earn wild card spots."

With that list, it can't be avoided that the PBA Christmas mainer feature the awesome league leader (Purefoods) against the defending conference titlist (Ginebra), who must strut out in order to avoid outright ouster.

Purefoods is sure to sizzle on Christmas Day but Ginebra, to repeat, may need a holiday visit to its embattled bench from no less than Bobby Jaworski, the Living Legend, in order to relieve original Batang Barangay Ginebra heroics for tomorrow's main event.

Both outfits play for the San Miguel flag but, going by their contrasting fortunes and styles, there's no assuring if meat products would prevail over good-old-reliable Marka Demonyo.

No matter which way the Christmas main game goes, the PBA shall have also scored timely winning points, mainly for the tireless party-goers around

us.

With the holiday offering at the Big Dome, the PBA is certain to prevent the careless foul shooters among the *balikbayans* from overstaying at the holiday table, that, no doubt, lurks with the sweet poison of pork and other rich, succulent holiday dangers.

Merry Christmas!

Happy, healthy burping to all!

(CURTAINS: Sympathies to our dear friend Efren "Bata" Reyes whose Kuya Fermín, a supreme gentleman like the world pool maestro himself, passed away last Thursday. Kindly pray for the eternal repose of Helen Racelis of Lucban, Quezon, mother of actress Yayo Aguila and outstanding campus beauty at the University of Santo Tomas in the early 1960s, who joined her Creator last week and was interred at the Manila Memorial Park in Parañaque... Salute and farewell to writer Adrian Cristobal, 75, teacher and great adviser.)

Puentevella taps MVP as 'godfather'

By June Navarro

NEWLY APPOINTED 2008 BEIJING OLYMPICS CHIEF OF MISSION Rep. Monico Puentevella has tapped a prospective "godfather" for boxing and taekwondo to boost the sports' chances of landing the Philippines' first gold medal.

Puentevella, also the Philippine Olympic Committee first vice president, got the commitment of PLDT/Smart chair Manny V. Pangilinan to support the campaign of the boxers and taekwondo jins in the Summer Games.

"Mr. Pangilinan has agreed to help fund the training of these athletes," said Puentevella. "We will bring back the godfather system by asking for the commitment of other (business) tycoons."

Taekwondo jins Tshomlee Go and Mary Antonette Rivero earned a return trip to the Olympics after hurdling their respective qualifying tournaments while boxer Harry Tañamor secured a Beijing stint at the world championships in Chicago in November.

"While the government has thrown its all-out support to the campaign, the private sector will also be asked to come in as well," said Puentevella.

The weightlifting chief and Bacolod congressman said he would arrange a meeting between the tycoons and President Macapagal-Arroyo as soon as he gets sponsor pledges.

"When I present them to the President, it will just be (a matter of their) acceptance (of the godfather's task)," said Puentevella.

Swimming has four Olympic

qualifiers, led by Southeast Asian Games quadruple-gold medalist Miguel Molina, JB Walsh, Daniel Coakley and Ryan Arabejo. Archery has also booked a ticket to the Games courtesy Mark Javier.

Top sports officials have earlier floated the names of shopping mall king Henry Sy of SM, Ayala's Don Jaime Zobel de Ayala and Danding Cojuangco of San Miguel Corp. as prospective backers of the country's Olympic drive.

"This is our most serious pursuit to win that elusive medal," said Puentevella. "And we will make sure that when we go there (Olympics), we're really prepared to get it this time."

POC president Jose "Pepeng" Cojuangco Jr. and PSC chair William "Butch" Ramirez will spearhead the core group of officials who will closely monitor the preparation of the athletes.

Puentevella said some of the athletes will start leaving to train overseas next month and that after the holidays, the monitoring group would meet at least once a week to tackle the issues concerning the country's Olympic drive.

The President, Puentevella said, has thrown her all-out support to the campaign by directly involving herself in the fund-raising drive to augment the Olympic war chest of P30 million.



MEMBERS and officials of the RP cycling team, led by top rider Irish Valenzuela, (eighth from left) and coach Jomel Lorenzo (left) flash the No. 1 sign.

Bike ace may race for Danish team

By Romina S. Austria

FRESH FROM ITS CONQUEST OF THE TOUR of Thailand, the national cycling team received yet another honor after top rider Irish Valenzuela was invited to race for Danish continental team Farso Denmark.

Coach Jomel Lorenzo said he has given his permission to Farso Denmark's team manager to recruit Valenzuela as long as the Filipino remains available to serve the Philippine team.

"Why not?" Lorenzo said over dzSR Sports Radio. "It would do the nationals a lot of good if they are tapped by foreign teams, especially the Europeans, because foreign exposure is what they need."

Lorenzo said that despite their lack of international experience, the national cyclists

snatched four gold medals in the recent 24th SEA Games before ruling the Tour of Thailand.

In the six-stage Thailand race that ended Friday, the 20-year-old Valenzuela placed second in the first stage and was the best-placed Filipino at fifth in the individual standings.

The RP team timed 72 hours, one minute and seven seconds to beat Japan (72:04:40) and Thailand A (72:08:01) for the overall general classification and Asean championships.

Other members of the team in the 1,094.54 km race were Victor Espinu, Warren Davadila, Lloyd Reynante and Ronald Gorantes.

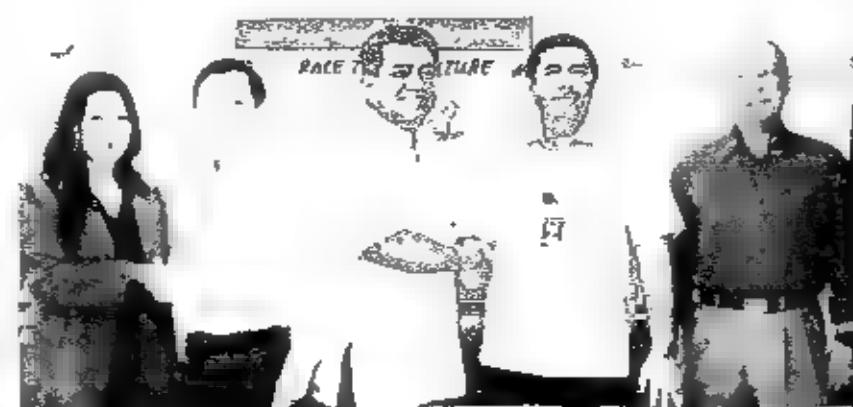
Kazem Sarai Ahad of Iran emerged individual champion with a clocking of 28:42.45, followed by Tonton Susanto of Indonesia (4 seconds behind), Jonanbansan Hossein of Iran (6 seconds behind) and Mahawang Prajak of

Thailand (3:09 behind).

Rounding out the final standings in the team classification: Iran (Tabriz Petrochemical) 72:11:02; Malaysia national team 72:36:38; Slovakia (Dukla Trencin Merida) 72:37:46; Germany (Kuota Sengas) 72:45:19; Denmark (Farso Denmark) 72:49:38; Chinese Taipei (Giant Asia Racing) 72:50:45; Vietnam national team 73:06:35; Indonesia (Customs Cycling Club Indonesia) 73:16:37; The Netherlands (Ysselsleerk) 73:43:48; and another Japanese team (Matrix Powertag) 73:45:59.

Roligon derby lures 65 entries

WITH 65 ENTRIES ALREADY LISTED AS OF yesterday, it's all systems go for the annual "Noche Buena" 4-cock derby on Dec. 27 at Roligon Mega Cockpit in Paranaque. Host Rolly Ligon urged participants said the first of over 120 fights will start at exactly 1 p.m. A guaranteed prize of P500,000 is at stake. Entry fee is P4.400.



CLARK MARATHON

Officials of network giant ABS-CBN and sponsors and organizers of the Clark Freeport International Marathon seal with handshakes their partnership for the coverage of the Jan. 13 foot race at Clark Field in Pampanga. The first major sports event of 2008 is expected to draw runners from around Asia. At the event's formal contract signing are (from left) CDC Tourism and Cultural manager Noemi Garcia, ABS-CBN Sports head Peter Musngi, ActivAsia Inc. president and CEO Manny de Luna, ABS-CBN VP and CFO Miguel Jose Navarrete and RACE president and race director Rudy Biscocho. With the network's participation, Clark Development Corporation and ActivAsia, Inc. have ensured international coverage of the marathon through ABS-CBN's The Filipino Channel.

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MONDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2007

SPORTS

A 23

Goma gets that winning feeling again

By Marc Reyes

RICHARD GOMEZ
The tall, thin 34-year-old became part of another winning team yesterday.

The towering movie and TV star added one more feather in his sports cap when he did his share in the 20-5 rout that Cebu pulled off against Manila in their rubber match for the Baseball Philippines Series 2 championship yesterday at the Rizal Memorial ball park.

Usually languishing in the dugout chewing on peanuts, Gomez, a former national shotgun shooter and fencer, suddenly found himself in the thick of things when the Dolphins started to rip the game apart.

Tapped to pinch-hit by Cebu team manager Isaac Bacarisas, he rapped a grounder to center to the delight of a lean Sunday crowd.

That burst of brilliance obviously surprised the Manila outfielders who scrambled for the ball while Jerome Bacarsas—who had earlier singled, then stole second—dashed for home.

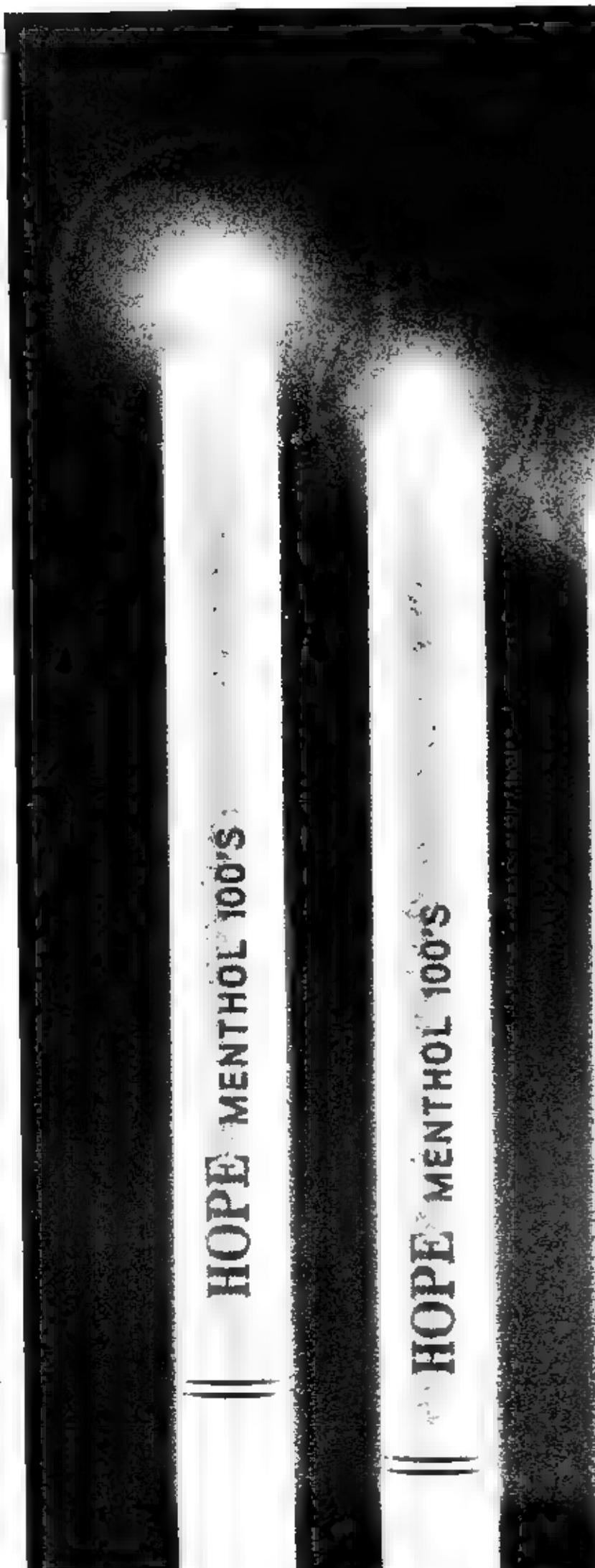
Gomez strode confidently to first base, then sprinted all the way to third.

The run-scoring triple was one of nine hits Cebu produced in the sixth inning where the Dolphins piled up nine runs to take a huge 18-1 lead.

It also vindicated Gomez somehow from a boner he committed a day earlier when he was nailed while trying to steal second in the eighth inning as pinch runner for Migsy Corcuera, Cebu trailing 8-9.

Until yesterday, Gomez's previous statistic in the conference was a two-run double in a no-bearing match against Marikina.

Gomez, 41, who reportedly tried out for the national baseball team, started out as a golfer before moving on to rowing, fencing and shooting.

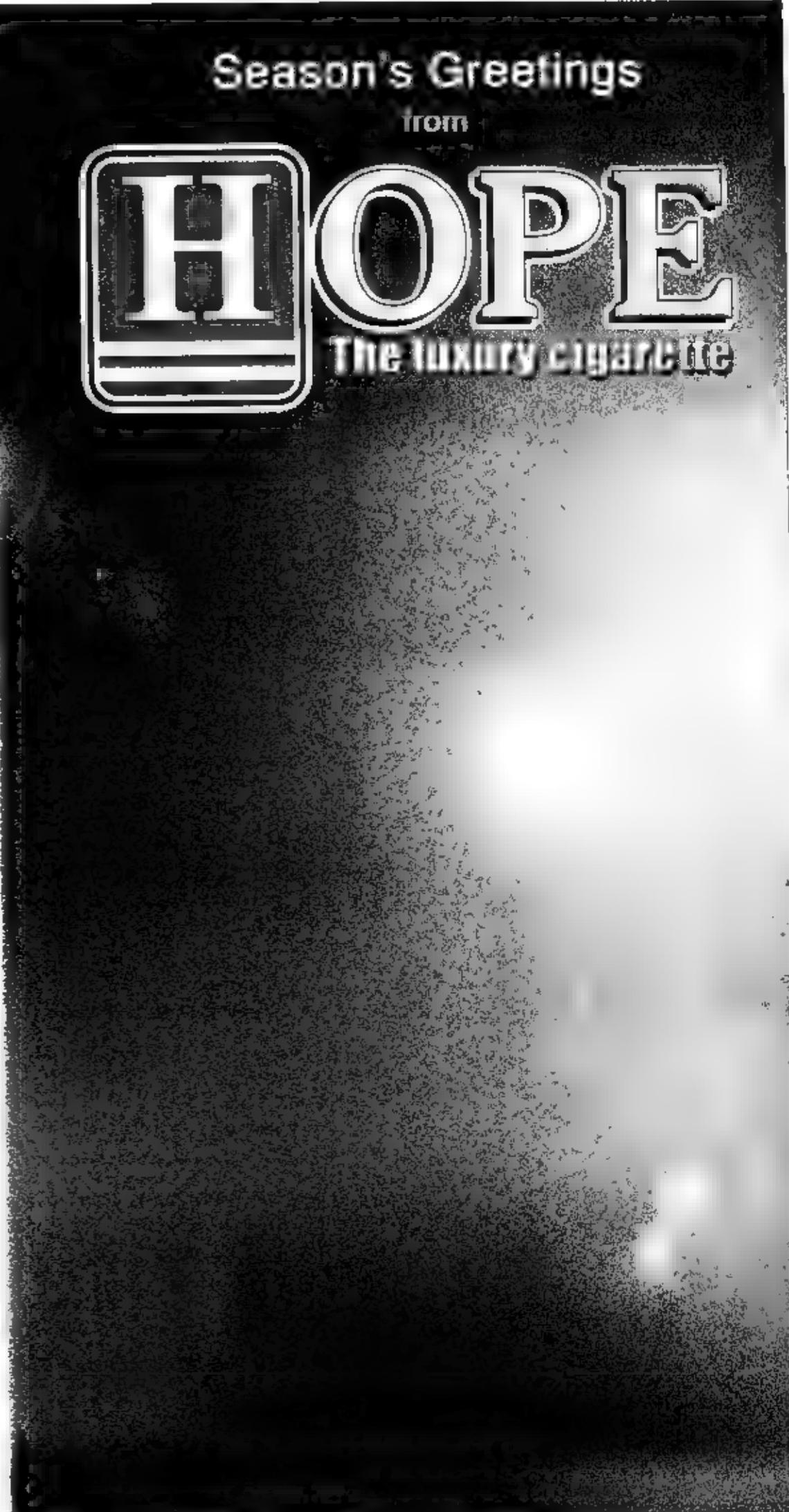


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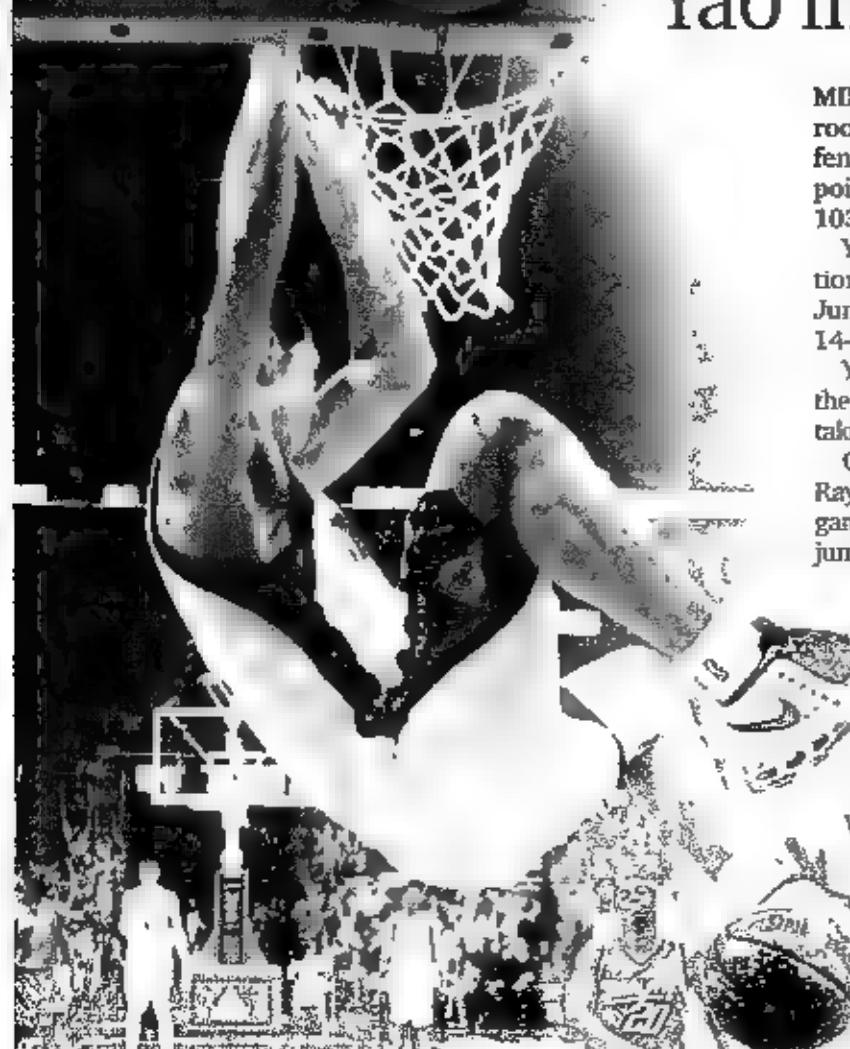


TRACY McGrady (top) of the Houston Rockets wrestles for control of the ball against Joe Smith of the Chicago Bulls.

AP

Hot Yi steers Bucks past Bobcats

Yao injured as Rockets turn back struggling Bulls



MILWAUKEE Bucks Chinese rookie Yi Jianlian slam dunks after a fastbreak, one of his many offensive moves in a career night.

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN—CHINESE rookie Yi Jianlian displayed an array of offensive weapons to score a career-high 29 points Saturday in the Milwaukee Bucks' 103-99 victory over the Charlotte Bobcats.

Yi, the sixth overall selection in the National Basketball Association draft last June, made his first 12 shots and finished 14-of-17 from the floor with 10 rebounds.

Yi scored 10 points in the third quarter as the Bucks built on their 58-47 halftime lead to take a 85-71 advantage after three quarters.

Charlotte narrowed the gap to 97-89 on Raymond Felton's jumper with 4:44 left in the game, but Yi promptly answered with a jumper of his own seconds later.

Yi's performance showed vast improvement from his first effort against the Bobcats.

In that, his second NBA outing, Yi scored just two points on 1-of-6 shooting in a 102-99 loss at Charlotte.

Michael Redd added 27 points and Mo Williams had 22 as the Bucks improved to 9-3 at home.

Jason Richardson scored 30 and Emeka Okafor and Felton scored 17 apiece for Charlotte, who trailed the entire game.

The Bobcats had to battle just to get to the contest in the face of winter storms wreaking havoc in Canada and in the Great Lakes and northeastern regions of the US.

Dense fog closed Milwaukee's airport, keeping the Bobcats in Charlotte following their victory over the New York Knicks on Friday.

The team finally left Charlotte early Saturday and headed for Madison, Wisconsin.

Madison's airport was also closed, so the plane flew to Minneapolis—St. Paul International Airport for fuel.

The team then departed for Green Bay, about 100 miles north of Milwaukee, but that airport was closed while they were in the air.

The team eventually landed at Chicago's Midway Airport and took a charter bus to Milwaukee, arriving an hour before the game.

In San Antonio, Tim Duncan had 34 points and a season-high 18 rebounds, and the San Antonio Spurs beat the severely undermanned Los Angeles Clippers, 99-90.

Tony Parker had 18 points in his first game back since missing four with a sprained left ankle. The Spurs snapped a two-game skid, while the Clippers' losing streak increased to four.

The game was never much in doubt, though the Clippers got within six points with less than two minutes to play.

In Phoenix, the Suns raced past the Toronto Raptors, 122-103, Toronto despite a career-high 42 points by the Raptors' Chris Bosh.

Leandro Barbosa, starting in place of injured Raja Bell, scored 31 points as Phoenix swept the season series from Toronto for the fourth consecutive season. The Suns are 8-0 against the Raptors since 2004.

In Indianapolis, Danny Granger scored 11 of his 25 points in the fourth quarter, and Indiana held off short-handed Washington, 93-85.

In Miami, Dwyane Wade hit a 20-foot jumper at the buzzer, giving the Heat a 104-102 victory over the Utah Jazz.

Wade finished with 20 points for Miami, which wasted a 16-point second-half lead—but won when the 2006 NBA finals MVP pump-faked, shot and saw the ball bounce off the rim and through the hoop as time expired.

In East Rutherford, New Jersey, Richard Jefferson scored 31 points, Jason Kidd collected his 94th career triple-double and the Nets tripped the Golden State Warriors, 100-95.

Vince Carter finished with 23 points, including a clutch three-pointer with 24.6 seconds left, for the Nets, who led by 14 in the first half and needed some clutch plays from their Big Three to get the win.

Kidd finished with 15 points, 12 assists and 11 rebounds.

In Chicago, Tracy McGrady returned to the Houston lineup and had 20 points and eight assists to lead Rockets past the Bulls, 116-98.

Yao Ming had 18 points and eight rebounds but sprained his right thumb in the third quarter.

In Memphis, Tennessee, Andre Iguodala made a 20-foot jumper as time expired to give the Philadelphia 76ers a 99-97 victory over the Grizzlies.

In New Orleans, Chris Paul had 19 points, 15 assists and five steals in only 30 minutes, helping the Hornets crush down-trodden Minnesota, 110-96.

AP

Escaño-Ignacio tops Chair's Cup

THIRTY ESCAÑO AND PARTNER ALEX IGNACIO exploited their familiarity of the course to score a combined net 10-under-par 62 and win the overall championship of the season-ending 2007 Chairman's Cup at the Sherwood Hills Golf Club in Trece Martínez, Cavite.

Escaño, a member of Sherwood Hills' sports and games committee, and Ignacio actually finished tied with three other pairs but they clinched the crown due to a lower handicap aggregate.

"This is my first with Alex [Ignacio] and hopefully we'll get more trophies in future Sherwood tournaments," said Escaño, who skippered the Manila Southwoods team during the Fili-Am Golf early this month.

Koreans Kim Hyung-soo and Park Hyun-keun carded a three-under par 69 to capture low gross honors at the Jack Nicklaus-designed course.

The one-day event was sponsored by Golforce Inc., Wilson Sports, Club Leisure, Custom Clubmakers, Venicare, Sports Specialist, APGC, CJH Dev Co., CJH Golf Club, Federal Management, Interconnect Systems, Isuzu Phis., Kork Inc., and Manila Southwoods Manor.



THIRTY Escaño (right) and partner Alex Ignacio (left) receive their trophies from Sherwood chair Robert Sobrepeña.

Foes find it tough to pierce through his 'D'

BOSTON—PAUL PIERCE ALways used to bristle when it was suggested that defense wasn't his forte. Or, perhaps, if it was suggested, in a jest, of course, that it wasn't part of his repertoire.

That's no longer the case. Two coaches who passed through Boston recently offered unsolicited tributes to Pierce for his defense.

"I think Paul Pierce is guarding as well as I've ever seen him," said Bucks coach Larry Krystkowiak. And Detroit's Flip Saunders said, "I've never seen Paul play defense the way he's played in the last two or three weeks. He's always been a guy who gets steals, but he's never been a guy who, one-on-one, will really go after you."

Both coaches also said the

same thing when asked for an explanation: the arrival of Kevin Garnett.

"Kevin makes it contagious," Saunders said.

Celtics coach Doc Rivers doesn't care how it happened or why it happened, but he definitely does agree with Krystkowiak and Saunders that it did, indeed, happen. "It's been unbelievable," Rivers said of

Pierce's defense. "His focus has climbed to such a high level. Before, at shoot-arounds, you had to say, 'Hey, Paul,' a few times. But he now understands that that is how we are going to win."

"Paul knows he's a good defensive player. Ray (Allen) knows he's a good offensive player. Kevin has always known that you have to be a defender all the time." NYT News Service

Flirting with undefeated season, Patriots battle woeful Dolphins

FOXBOROUGH—THE PATRIOTS are playing for history today at Gillette Stadium. The Miami Dolphins are playing to preserve it.

With homefield advantage throughout the AFC playoffs wrapped up, the Patriots' assault on the NFL record books and quest for

an undefeated season are the only compelling story lines remaining in the final two regular-season games.

New England (14-0) could set several NFL team and individual records today. With 34 points, the Patriots would surpass the 1998 Minnesota Vikings (556) for the most points in a season; with four touchdowns, they would surpass the NFL mark for a season, 70, set by the 1984 Dolphins; and if someone new, like veteran wideout Troy Brown, were to find his way into the end zone, the team would establish a record for most players to score a TD in a season, topping the mark of 21, held by the 1987 Rams and the 2000 Broncos.

Quarterback Tom Brady needs five touchdown passes to break Peyton Manning's season record of 49, and wide receiver Randy Moss needs four TD receptions to erase Jerry Rice's standard for a season (22).

"Whatever the numbers are, they are or they aren't, but the most important number is 14 wins and hopefully we can make it 15," said Patriots coach Bill Belichick. "I think that's the number that we're all looking at, is

the win-loss column."

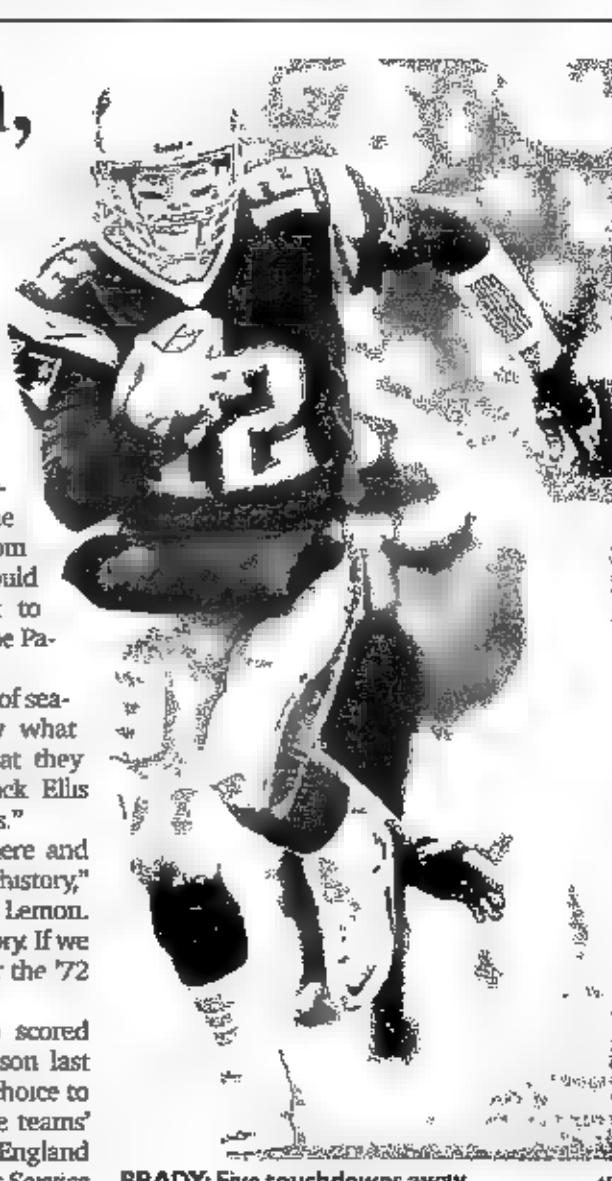
Indeed, the most cherished mark the Patriots are chasing is the 1972 Dolphins' perfect season—17-0 overall, 14-0 in the regular season. Although the latter-day Dolphins, who started the season 0-13, are a far cry from their 1972 counterparts, it would be an early Christmas gift to South Florida if they ended the Patriots' pursuit of perfection.

"Understanding what type of season we've had, you know what their intentions are and what they want to do," said cornerback Ellis Hobbs. "Let's not kid ourselves."

"There's a lot of history here and we know we're a part of that history," said Miami quarterback Cleo Lemon. "We want to uphold that history. If we can go out and get a win for the '72 team, that would be great."

The 1-13 Dolphins, who scored their first victory of the season last week, would be an unlikely choice to foil the Patriots based on the teams' first meeting, a 49-28 New England rout Oct. 21.

NYT News Service



BRADY: Five touchdowns away

AP

IN THIS ISSUE

- No Free Lunch: Hits and misses /B2
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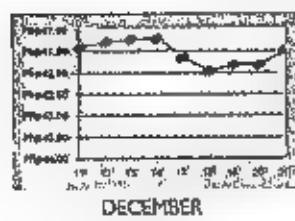
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Peso seen stabilizing at 41 to \$1

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STOCK MARKET

Thin trading seen

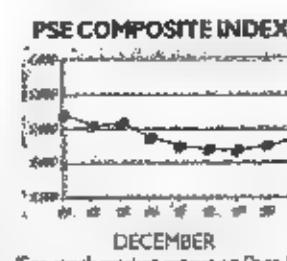
MARKET TRADES ARE EXPECTED to be thin during this three-day trading week.

Online brokerage 2TradeAsia.com said in a weekly report to clients that some stocks could rise on buying from institutional fund managers' window-dressing activity.

Window-dressing refers to a strategy used by mutual fund and portfolio managers and companies near the end of a year or a quarter to improve the appearance of their portfolio, fund performance or share price before presenting it to clients or shareholders.

2TradeAsia said sentiment could be boosted by strong eco-

THINKS



DECEMBER
(See stock market report on Page B2)

Bear Stearns sees end to BSP rate cuts

By Doris C. Dumao

AMERICAN INVESTMENT BANKING GIANT BEAR Stearns sees the peso firming up at 41 against the dollar in the next 12 months while projecting the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas to end its cycle of interest rate reduction.

"Our top currency picks for 2007 were the Indian rupee and the Philippine peso. They remain on our top picks for 2008 but we also add the Chinese renminbi and Malaysian ring-

git," Bear Stearns said in a commentary dated Dec. 19.

The bank noted that the leading performer this year was clearly the peso, followed closely by the Thai baht until recent-

ly when numerous restrictions on the baht slowed down the latter's appreciation.

Bear Stearns added the Chinese renminbi as well as the Malaysian ringgit to its list of outperforming currencies for 2008.

"We believe that all four currencies will benefit from a combination of rising or already high interest rates as well as continued large capital inflows," it said.

In the month ahead, the bank

predicted the peso stabilizing at 41.80 and only slightly gaining to 41.60 in the next six months before surging to 41 in 12 months.

Bear Stearns said the rise in Philippine inflation last week to a 10-month high of 3.2 percent suggested that the time of interest-rate easing in the country had "come and gone."

It also observed that the Philippines was tracking its historical inflation rate range of 4-percent

PESO/B2

Gov't borrowings down 30% in 11 months

By Michelle V. Reno

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT'S borrowings from January to November posted a double-digit decline from a year ago as the rise in revenues, boosted by

the sale of state-owned assets, reduced the need for loans.

Documents from the Bureau of the Treasury showed that the government incurred P415.95 billion in new loans in the first 11 months of the year, or lower

by 30 percent from the P592.39 billion in borrowings in the same period last year.

Those borrowed from local sources accounted for P303.96 billion, which was lower by 12.5 percent than the P347.57 billion

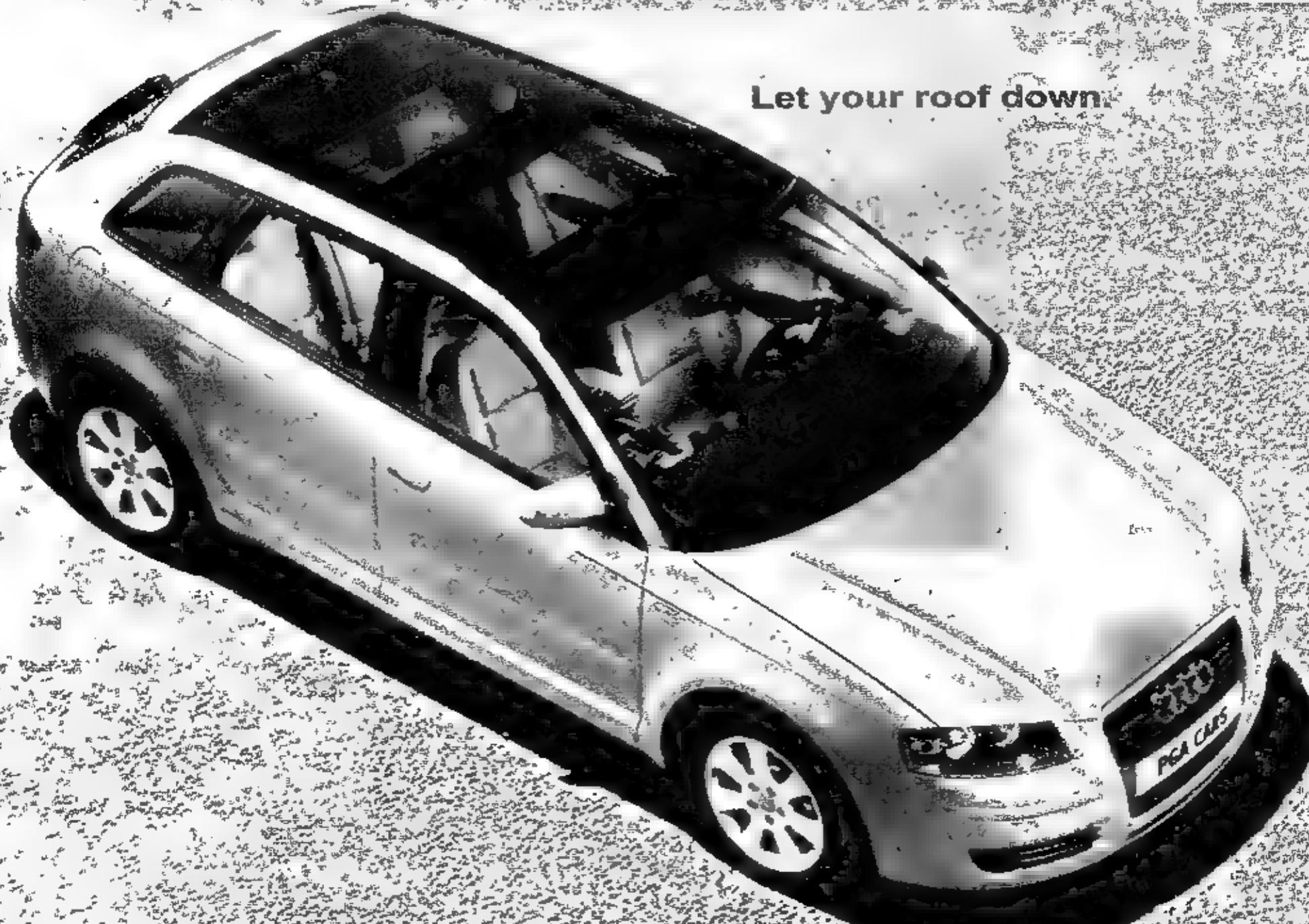
a year ago. Domestic borrowings were done largely through the sale of treasury bills and bonds.

Foreign borrowings accounted for P111.99 billion of the total borrowings as of November.

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Mandaue City Reclamation now attracting more investment projects

By Irene R. Sino-Cruz
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY MORE than 10 years after it was completed, the Mandaue City Reclamation Area has finally attracted investments, including the mall project of a Cebu-based company.

Mall venture

Carlos Co, chair of Golden Great Value Properties of Cebu Oversea Hardware Group, said his firm would invest between P300 million and P400 million in Parkmall, its first venture into mall operations.

Co said it took about a year to complete the design as they would like it to reflect the Cebuano lifestyle.

Christopher Tio, director for Parkmall business development, said the firm decided to invest into mall operations as it saw bright prospects in Cebu's economy and in the retail sector.

He said that in a recent meeting, representatives of the country's major hypermarts had expressed confidence in Cebu's prospects.

In fact, Tio said, Saye More, one of the biggest supermarket chains, would locate at Parkmall.

Confidence

Confidence
"We believe that the market of Cebu is growing. It still has untapped market potential," said Eva Du, Supervalue Inc., operations manager for Visayas and Mindanao.

She said the Save More would unveil its new logo, concept and layout at the Parkmall branch, which would be the biggest outside Metro Manila.

Tio said there were 12 projects about to break ground in Mandauay Reclamation. He said the inflow of investments showed confidence in Cebu.

He said the first phase of Parkmall, which includes Saver More and the alfresco areas, would be completed by February next year while the main mall, which includes the Garden Enclave, would be fully operational by June 2009.

June 2008
The Parknall is located at a six-hectare lot in the Mandau City reclamation area but the mall itself will have a floor area of about 30,000 square meters.

New ventures
The other projects at the 180-hectare reclamation area are the Cebu Boardwalk Mall, the 21-floor Nature's Suite and the Robinland Business Center; a nine-floor building that would offer office and retail space.

and retail spaces. The Nature Suite is a project of the owners of Nature Springs Waters, a proposed business hotel with over 1,000 rooms.

over 1,000 rooms. The Robinson Business Center project would target information technology (IT) locators.

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Philex raises stake in Pitkin to 10.8%

Additional 6.4% of Texas-based exploration firm acquired

By Amy R. Remo

LISTED FIRM PHILEX MINING CORP SAID it had subscribed to an additional six million shares of Pitkin Petroleum Ltd. for \$3 million, in behalf of its wholly owned subsidiary Philex Petroleum Corp.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, Philex said the acquisition of an additional 6.4-percent stake in Pitkin was in line with its thrust to increase its portfolio in petroenergy.

This brought the Philex group's stake in Pitkin to 10.8 percent. Earlier, Philex subscribed to four million shares in Pitkin for \$2 million, representing a 4.4-percent stake in the company.

The additional 6.4-percent Pitkin stake alone accounted for 36 percent of the Philex group's portfolio in oil projects.

Pitkin is a Texas-based junior exploration company in the United States, currently producing on a small-scale basis in Louisiana.

However, according to the disclosure, Pitkin has properties in offshore Vietnam and Peru.

The drilling in Vietnam, where Pitkin holds a 40-percent stake, is reportedly scheduled to begin in 2009. This involves two wells, which cost around \$53 million.

Philex has interests in three other petroleum projects in Northwest Palawan and South Sulu sea areas.

Its other energy-related investment is in its wholly owned subsidiary, Brixton Energy and Mining Corp., which is currently undertaking predevelopment activities in a coal property in Zamboanga.

Philex Mining is a member of the consortium holding service contract 41 covering the deepwaters of South Sulu Sea.

It has a 2.264-percent interest in SC 41 up to the completion of a 750-square-meter 3D seismic survey which was estimated to cost more than \$6 million.

Philex likewise holds a 1.65-percent stake in SC-6 (Cadiao Block in Northwest Palawan) and 1.668 percent in SC-6A (Octon Block in Northwest Palawan).

The Cadiao field is estimated to produce between 1 to 2 million barrels of oil.

Philex also owns Coal Operating Con-

tract 130 in Buug-Diplahan South Zamboanga, which has an estimated coal reserve of 2 million metric tons.

Coal quality ranges from bituminous to semi-anthracite which is expected to command price premium with the prevailing market conditions, the firm said.

Philex is seeking approval from the Department of Energy to convert COC 130 and start mine development works in the area.

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Thin

conomic growth expectations for the fourth quarter this year against a backdrop of low inflation and interest rates, and expectations of strong overseas Filipino workers remittances till the new year.

AB Capital Securities said stocks could drift sideways due to the lack of negative leads.

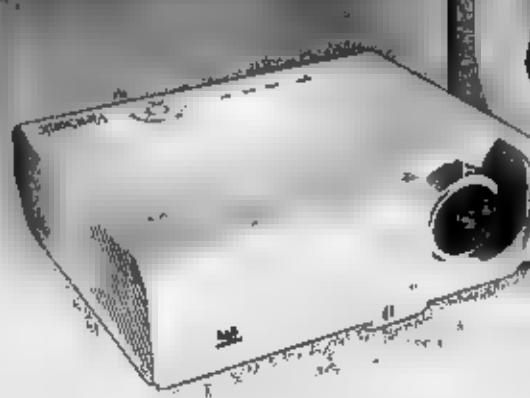
"Traders will ride on positive momentum as year-end window-dressing will continue. Trading range will be between 3,500 to 3,600," AB Capital Securities said.

Campos Lanuza & Co. also said that the market could be lacking in excitement with just three days left in the trading year.

The broker advised investors to buy stocks that remained undervalued and those that stood to benefit from the government's move to sell power assets.

The stock market will be closed on Dec. 24 and 25.

Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson



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IPVG eyes stake in contact center

By Riza T. Olchondra

IPVG CORP (IPVG) IS BACK ON THE SHOPPING trail for a contact center after being rejected by PeopleSupport.

The listed information and communications technology firm said it was buying a majority stake in another US-based outsourcing company called Interactive Teleservices Corp. (Influent) for a still undisclosed amount.

IPVG said in a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange that it had executed a memorandum of agreement with the stockholders of Influent "for the acquisition of a 70-percent stake in the company, subject to the approval of IPVG's board of directors."

IPVG said it wanted to close the deal in the first quarter of 2008, after completing its financial and legal due diligence.

Transco sells more sub-transmission assets

By Abigail L. Ho

NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORP HAS P138.92 million worth of sub-transmission assets to Zambales 2 Electric Cooperative (Zameco 2), Batangas 1 Electric Cooperative (Batelec 1) and Surigao Del Norte Electric Cooperative (Surneco).

The Zameco 2 contract is worth P55.7 million, the Batelec 1 deal, P66.9 million and the Surneco lease purchase agreement, P16.3 million.

Under its agreement with Transco, Zameco 2 will purchase 525 structures and 69-kilovolt (kV) lines along the Olongapo-Phuseco, Phiseco Tap-Castillejos and Botolan-Castillejos 69-kV segments from San Felipe to Castillejos. These span a total of 48.8 circuit kilometers.

Batelec 1 is buying 647 structures along the Calaca-Taal and Calaca-Nasugbu-Calatagan 69-kV lines covering 63.6 circuit kilometers. The electric cooperative is purchasing the substation equipment in Taal as well.

For its part, Surneco has signed a contract to purchase 72 structures along the Anislagan-Surigao-Pacemco 69-kV line spanning 12.5 circuit kilometers.

All three electric cooperatives can take advantage of Transco's financing program, which allows technically and financially qualified power distributors to pay only 20 percent of the selling price upon the Energy Regulatory Commission's approval of the lease purchase agreement.

The balance can then be amortized over a number of years. In Zameco 2's case, the payment period spans 17 years. The install-

ment period for Batelec 1 and Surneco is 15 years and 20 years, respectively.

"Power customers in North Luzon, South Luzon and Mindanao are the ones who stand to benefit greatly from the privatization of the sub-transmission assets. By purchasing and committing to operate and maintain these assets, these electric cooperatives have assured customers of improved operations and expansion projects under their franchise areas," Transco president Arthur Aguilar said.

Transco, on the other hand, will be able to focus more on improving the reliability and efficiency of the nationwide high-voltage transmission network," he added.

Transco has so far sold P2.5 billion worth of sub-transmission assets to technically and financially qualified distribution utilities and electric cooperatives nationwide.

The buyers included 42 electric cooperatives and distribution utilities absorbing 320-megavolt-ampere (MVA) transformers, 16,947 structures, and 1,845 circuit kilometers of lines.

All sub-transmission divestment contracts become effective only upon the approval of the ERC.

RA 9136, or the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001 (Epica), requires Transco to sell off its sub-transmission assets to qualified power distributors.

Transco has a total of P8.8 billion worth of sub-transmission assets nationwide, which includes 6,900 circuit kilometers of mostly 69-kV lines and 1,600 MVA of substation capacity.

The balance can then be amortized over a number of years. In Zameco 2's case, the payment period spans 17 years. The install-

BUSINESS Monday

Power women in business talk about 2007 and 2008

By Margie Quimpo-Espino

Tessie Sy
(SM Group) Retail, banking, property development

Given our 9-month performance for this year, and the positive economic environment in the fourth quarter, we seem to be on track to achieve our profit growth target of between 12 and 15 percent for 2007. For the first 9 months of the year, our profits grew by 14 percent to P8.5 billion. Excluding extraordinary items, recurring income increased by 22 percent to P6.2 billion.

Projects undertaken

On the retail merchandising business, we opened five stores, of which two are department stores, two are hypermarkets and one supermarket. For the malls, we opened three new ones in Bacolod, Taytay and Muntinlupa. Also, we expanded San Fernando Pampanga, Cebu, and Mall of Asia; the latter with the opening of the Science Discovery Center. All told, our floor space increased by about 10 percent.

For the banks, BDO got into the thick of its consolidation with Equitable PCI Bank, while China Bank acquired Manila Banking Corp.

For property, our group got very busy with launching three new residential projects with Lindenwood Residences, Berkeley and Grass.

The commercial developers completed and launched SMX Convention Center and will soon open our BPO building OneE-com Center. We also successfully launched our tourism project in Hamilo called Pico de Loro which has sold over P1 billion worth of condo units. And finally, for hotels, we are now expanding Taal Vista Hotel and refurbishing Cebu Sofitel which will be a five-star hotel by the time it's finished in late 2008.

Expectations for 2008

We are confident that the Philippine economy has sufficient momentum to cope with the external challenges facing it such as the weakness in the US and European markets and higher inflation due to the unrelenting increase in crude oil.



TESSIE SY-COSON



VICKI JARDOLIN

prices. On that note, we decided to pursue our expansion plans across all our core businesses. Both our retail and mall businesses will be expanding outside of Metro Manila, while the banks will complete their consolidation of recent acquisitions.

The property group will launch new residential projects, and perhaps break ground for the sports arena and the Radisson hotel which will both be at the Mall of Asia complex. We will continue to sell condo units and beach and country club shares in Pico de Loro. All these will cost the whole group about P26 billion in capital expenditures.

Dr. Vicki Belo
(Belo Medical Group) Beauty business

2007 was a turning point for the Belo Medical Group. We experienced better than industry growth rate despite uncontrollable factors in the external front... the shrinking of the US dollar in the last quarter of 2007, political issues hounding the economy, entry of new competitors.

2007 gave BMG the opportunity to evaluate its internal strengths and went on to consolidate and retool human capital (BMG invested heavily on training personnel) established

world class standards, invest in information technology, made inroads in operational efficiencies, trained and empowered managers, invest in new marketing channels and opened new mall-based branches in Rustan's and Trinoma.

It also trained its sights on regional markets in Asia leveraging the power of the Belo brand. BMG is constantly looking for new/growth areas in Asia to establish its medical presence.

2008 and beyond

Belo Medical Group is definitely on track in its growth plans for 2008. Actually our growth plan covers a five-year strategic program starting in 2007 up to 2012. The game plan is to calibrate BMG and prepare the organization to embrace unprecedented growth in the global medical tourism picture.

International healthcare and medical tourism organizations have identified the Philippines as a major destination for healthcare and wellness and BMG is bracing for a borderless transaction on the medical and wellness industry.

1. BMG will continue to invest and train its people (doctors and nonmedical personnel) to be world-class service providers. Its biggest asset would be its front liners.

2. Upgrade BMG's existing branches and establish clinics in growth areas within and outside Metro Manila.

3. Invest in research and development and create a culture of innovation in all service fronts.

4. Continue to innovate on new cosmetic and dermatological services. BMG will be aggressive in making its doctors attend international conferences on the latest trends on cosmetic and dermatological initiatives. Doctor Belo requires its doctors to produce academic

standard research materials so they can present them to these international conventions.

5. Maintain BMG's lead as a product and service leader.

Joji Ilagan-Bian
(Tumble Tot) Educational institutions, business process outsourcing

My main businesses are educational institutions (international franchise preschool, hospitality and tourism college, eight call center schools and a 200-seat call center in Davao and in Manila).

2007 was a good year for all our businesses. Our hospitality school has undergone major renovations; classrooms and working laboratories were all equipped with the most modern facilities in hospitality and culinary training.

We were able to open eight call center schools nationwide. Capitalizing on the current trend of overseas employment, we opened the biggest and most modern welding school in Mindanao and a health and caregiver school toward the end of the year.

The British Franchise Preschool, Tumble Tots, transferred to its own building in Quezon City providing more classrooms and a bigger play and activity area. This is now the biggest Tumble Tots school in the Asia-Pacific. We have added more classrooms in the Davao Tumble Tots; from six to eight classrooms and added computers in the rooms of the older kids.

From 172 seats in Davao City, the Six Eleven Global Services, our small call center, expanded in Manila to another 200 seats.

2007 was a very good year for all my businesses—we surpassed our growth targets. Normally, we would be happy with 10-15% increase in enrollment for our schools—but this year we hit 30 percent. We attribute this both to the good business environment; people have money to pay for quality education and they must have more disposable income in their hands. I am saying this because the enrollment in our Gymbabes (6 months old) in Tumble Tots and 2007 summer programs in all our schools regis-



VICKI BELO

tered an increase of 40 percent. We were able to open three branches of call center schools in Mindanao because the demand for skilled call center agents from call centers were tremendous. We brought training and employment opportunities in partnership with the big call centers here in Manila down to the major cities of Mindanao.

I had just finished signing an educational cooperation agreement with TAFE New South Wales South Western Sydney Institute to jointly offer the Certificate 111 in Hospitality in my hospitality school in Davao; giving access to students in Mindanao to acquire TAFE training and certificate without traveling to Sydney. This will commence on June 2008.

We want to put up four more call center schools and welding training schools in major cities in Mindanao and establish stronger partnerships with businesses here in Manila and overseas so that we can provide more employment opportunities to our graduates.

Normally, our employment rate is 65 percent; I am telling my people that we should hit 70-75 percent next year. We will be putting our own career placement office to focus on placement and employment of all our graduates—we will do this as free service to all our graduates.

The 200-seat call center which we put up here in Manila last November is not yet operating—so we have to move more aggressively and go out to where the small business partners are in the United States to

get accounts to run in the call center by next year. For 2008, we are still following the same trend—of modest growth projections for the call center business that we have. We will embark on a massive industry marketing campaign together with the association of small call centers (Phil Call).

I believe that 2008 will be a year full of positive challenges—positive because I think there may be greater concerns to hurdle—but once we will be able to address these "positive problems," business will be better.

The outlook for small and medium sized businesses (like what I have) is bright—there will be more markets for us. One of the challenges is also to look beyond the Mindanao borders as a good market for products and services;

be more flexible and creative in doing business, which we can easily do because of our size.

Vicki Jardolin
(Natasha and Confetti) Direct selling and retail

Natasha (a direct selling company) had growth of about 20 percent. We started and intend to expand the Natasha Mall—a section in our catalogue where established brands such as Bobson, Bossini, Confetti, Dickies, Handford, Nafrad and Oshkosh display their selected products as in a real mall. Expansion of kids' line are also planned. Expecting OFW remittances to increase purchases of apparel and personal care items through a strong peso is a cause for concern. This may dampen spending somewhat especially after the holiday spending.

Can you imagine holding success tool—literally?



DINO MANOSA

Jondy Syjuco, the man behind the pioneering movement to revive the art of expressing gratitude in the metro, needs to stay savvy to be the best in his field. "To be an effective marketing manager, you have to keep in tune with the latest tools to boost your competence." The Treo 750 acts like a "business Swiss knife" that lets Jondy create Word and Excel reports, rehearse PowerPoint presentations and even consult PDF files.

As a CEO of various companies, it is very important for Dino Manosa to stay connected and be updated with the developments of his businesses and know the new demands from his clients. "We have a lot of international clients that require immediate and constant correspondence," explains Dino. "Constant communication is of vital importance for the growth of our firms." Dino is thankful for his Treo 750 which

Fusing Palm's easy to use innovations and the qualities of the Windows Operating System, the Treo 750 is the handheld "success tool" of choice for these individuals.

Running a five star hotel is not an easy task. As a business relying on customer satisfaction and loyalty, Cecile Ang, cannot afford to forget any detail. A small glitch can put her hotel in peril. The Treo 750 enables Cecile to manage her busy schedule and update her to-do list in a chic fashion. "It's like having my staff with me all the time. I can even voice record additional items when I suddenly remember other things I have to accomplish," says Cecile.

CECILE ANG



Despite their hectic careers, these people also know how to have fun. Cecile, who's into photography, can take spontaneous shots and add these to her portfolio. Jondy is a self-confessed audiophile who can easily download and listen to the latest chart-toppers with his Treo 750. Dino is an avid golf player—both at the course and virtually using his Treo 750.

Microwarehouse Inc. is the distributor of networking, mobile and digital lifestyle devices in the Philippines

Wiring your organization for change

MAPPING THE FUTURE

By Niceto S. Poblador



A MANAGEMENT SEMINAR which was announced recently in the business pages of this newspaper was on the topic "Managing Organizational Change." Among the specific topics listed were "Developing a 'Change Intervention' Plan" and "Methodologies and Techniques to Promote Proactive Change Planning."

I recall that many, many years back, "Managing Change" was standard fare in most MBA programs and was a hot topic in management training seminars. Apparently, it still is.

I must confess my utter ignorance, but I thought all the while that this topic has become passé. I was dead wrong! I googled "Change Management" and got—hold your breaths—667 million hits! A quick search at amazon.com yielded over 39,000 results (including, of course, the classic 1996 book by John Kotter, *Leading Change*). And of course, we still have seminars like the one I just noted. (Judging from the seminar fee P11,977 + VAT for a two-day workshop, I can see that it is still a hot topic.)

Traditionally, a change management strategy has been defined as one that is planned and implemented in a systematic manner. It is, in other words, part of a rational exercise intended to

"Gone are the days when everybody awaited 'the next big thing.' What is needed," he added, "is not to prepare for anticipated changes but to 'foster a culture of change' in organizations." By this I am sure he must have meant change as a continuing process.

My own thinking on the matter (developed in Chapter 3 of my book *Strategy Demystified*, currently languishing in National Bookstore shelves!) is that in today's surge environment, organizations can no longer manage change (in the same way that they manage, say, financial assets). Instead, organizations must be wired for continuous change. In today's world of business where everything is moving at break-neck speed, the most adaptive organization is the one that can change quickly, spontaneously, without even giving it a thought.

Putting in place a carefully designed and thoroughly planned program of change in organizations is bound to miscarry for the simple reason that it tends to be overtaken by events.

(The article reflects the personal opinion of the author. The author is an active academic and a knowledge management consultant. Feedback at mapsec@globenet.com.ph)

OBITUARIES



Dr. Eduardo "Eddie" Cordova Geraldo

Passed away peacefully in the grace of our Lord on December 14, 2007 in Houston, Texas at the age of 81.

Eddie, originally from Numancia, Aklan, trained as a surgeon in various cities in the U.S. and worked in the provinces of Iloilo and Aklan till his retirement at age 65. Prior to his retirement, he was Chief of Hospital, Rafael S. Tumbukon Memorial Hospital and later, the Provincial Health Officer of Aklan.

He is survived by his wife, Dr. Remedios Escobar Geraldo; children Victoria, Deborah, Edward, Grace, Eduardo and Cristina; sons and daughters-in-law, Berry, Myrna, Jeffrey, Patricia and Raymond; grandchildren, Marvi, Arnon, Edrik, Raynher, Joboy, Ian, Arlene, Via and Chase; siblings Claire, Sor Ma. Socorro and Isidro.

Visitation will be held at Imperial Standard Chapel, La Funeraria Paz, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City on December 24, 2007.

Interment will be on December 27, 2007 at the La Loma Catholic Cemetery.

Death Notice

NARCISO S. SAN JUAN

Died peacefully on December 22, 2007 at the age of 75.

His body lies in state at #3 Puso St., Montico Village, Marilao, Bulacan.

Internment will be on December 26 at Marilao Memorial Park at 2:00 p.m.

"...absent from the body to be present with the Lord."

— 2 Corinthians 5:8



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RUBEN FORCADELA TAN

of Pitogo, Quezon and Galas, Quezon City

Passed away on December 22, 2007 at the age of 67.

His wife Cora; children Thaddy, Tracy, Trina and Livius; daughters-in-law Liezl and Marge; grandchildren, request pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Arlington Memorial Chapels, Inc., 12-G Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be announced at a later date.



"I am the way, the truth and the life.
No one comes to the Father except through Me."
John 14:6

GO BEE HUI TYCANGCO

Peacefully joined her Creator on December 21, 2007 at the age of 72.

Her loving husband Antonio; children Samuel and Mary Ann, Daniel, Esther, Amelia and Nico, Elaine and Wilhem, Racheli and Efren, Junior and grandchildren request your prayers for the repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at Sanctuarium, Araneta Ave., Quezon City.

Cremation will follow at 8:00 a.m. on Thursday, December 27, 2007 at Sanctuarium Crematory.

CLASSIFIEDS

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JOIN THE EPERFORMAX XTREME CAREER Expo. As part of the company's efforts to strengthen its employee referral program and to provide exceptional careers, Epermax, one of the country's most stable call center companies based in Buendia, Makati City, is holding a post-Christmas job fair dubbed as "Xtreme Career Expo". The job fair will be on Dec. 27-28, from 10 a.m. - 7 p.m. at the Trade Hall (near the food court area) of StarMall Edsa in Shaw Blvd., Mandaluyong City.

The said event aims to recruit call center agents for the different Epermax clients and have them start training on Jan. 2, 2008. In addition to extending the holiday cheer by employing more people, Epermax will also give a post-Christmas bonus to all applicants who will be hired during the 2-day job fair.

ePermax Contact Centers is a privately held corporation established through a partnership formed between Performance Consulting Group of the U.S. and Transnational Diversified Group (TDG) of the Philippines.

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It believes that the use of unlicensed software, which is a criminal offense under the Intellectual Property Law of the Philippines, must be put to a stop.

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BUSINESS

Trade with Taiwan shrank 4% as of September

By Ronnel W. Domingo

MERCHANDISE TRADE WITH TAIWAN

Taiwan remained on a downturn as of end-September, with the value of exchanged goods down 4 percent at \$5.3 billion even as economic officials pushed for closer ties.

According to the latest data from Taipei's Government Information Office, Taiwan bought from the Philippines \$1.72 billion worth of goods from January to September.

The volume of imports from

the Philippines dropped 20.89 percent from about \$2.17 billion in the same period of 2006.

At the same time, Taiwanese shipments to the Philippines were valued at \$3.59 billion, increasing by 7.04 percent from \$3.35 billion in the same period last year.

Further, the Taiwan GIO reported that the Philippines remained Taiwan's 15th-largest trading partner in the nine-month period, accounting for 1.56 percent of the island-economy's total global trade valued at about \$340 billion.

Among developing countries excluding mainland China, the Philippines was Taiwan's sixth-largest trade partner after Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam.

China is Taiwan's largest trading partner with an 18.9-percent share or \$64.4 billion of the latter's aggregate trade in terms of value.

Also, the Philippines was the 11th largest destination of Taiwanese exports with 2 percent of total outbound cargoes valued at some \$178.7 billion.

The country ranked 17th among the largest sources of Taiwan's imports, accounting for about 1.07 percent of total inbound shipments worth some \$161.28 billion.

This was a notch higher than a month earlier, when the Philippines trailed India in terms of the value of shipments to Taiwan.

The end-September ranking was also a notable improvement from the first quarter when the Philippines was ranked 20th.

In November, Taiwanese officials reiterated calls for more investment incentives as Taipei and Manila continue to work out the realization of a Subic-Kaohsiung economic corridor.

Minister of Economic Affairs Steve Chen, who visited the country for the annual joined economic council meeting, said Taiwanese investors were particularly hopeful for better business climate in the Subic and Clark freeport zones.

"Many Taiwanese firms are increasingly getting discour-

aged with the deteriorating investment conditions in China and are looking for alternative destinations," Chen had said.

He said examples under discussion were efforts to ensure sufficient supply of power and water at much more stable prices; ensure production cost could be maintained at a much lower level; and provide market potential for Taiwanese investors not only in the Philippines but also in the entire Southeast Asian region.

Gov't attracts offers to bring Travel Café to more countries

INVESTOR INTEREST IN THE DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM'S PIONEERING GLOBAL FRANCHISE CHAIN OF TRAVEL CAFÉS IS SNOWBALLING WITH MORE POTENTIAL FRANCHISEES SEEKING TO OPEN BRANCHES IN THE MIDDLE EAST, RUSSIA, CHINA, CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES.

Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace Durano said in an interview that some investors had expressed interest to open Travel Café Philippines in Dubai, Moscow, Beijing, Los Angeles, Las Vegas and Vancouver.

Durano said this was developing as first franchise holder TravelNCuisine, a joint venture between Japan's Travel Café Co. Ltd. (TCCL) and Makati Skyline Inc., last week opened the first of three prototype TCPs at Greenbelt 5.

Described as a destination-themed lifestyle café and geared for the high-end market, TCP integrates the businesses of a restaurant and a travel and tourism office where customers can plan and arrange vacations.

TravelNCuisine is expected to open the other two branches at the SM Mall of Asia and SMX Convention Center in January.

The same franchisee is preparing two more branches in San Francisco, California while TCCL is investing alone in a TCP in Singapore—a follow up to the first TCP in Tokyo.

"As soon as we can confirm locations, we are ready to open TCPs in Seoul, South Korea and Shanghai in China," Durano said.

The official explained that prototype branches were needed to test the franchise operations systems and ensure that these were working and could be replicated.

Further, he said the prototypes must be in full business operation to serve as a demonstration café for potential franchisees.

In an interview last week, TCCL executive vice president Kazuyuki Goto said the prototype branch was considered a laboratory, from where baristas would be trained for this specialized café and where new items for the menu would be developed.

Goto said the Greenbelt 5 branch would be the headquarters for the worldwide TCP network.

He explained that the idea behind TCP, which he developed, was to entice potential tourists to the Philippines through the experiences available in the menu as well as the sights and sounds within the café.

The Greenbelt 5 menu highlights civet or alamed coffee, touted as the rarest and most expensive type of coffee in the world, as well as salad with adobo flakes, kare-kare, pan de sal, turon and suman.

Ronnel W. Domingo

DA steps up campaign vs bird flu

By Amy R. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE HAS INTENSIFIED ANTI-BIRD FLU MEASURES AMID REPORTS THAT THE DREADED AVIAN INFLUENZA HAS AGAIN RESURFACED IN ASIA, PARTICULARLY INDONESIA, MYANMAR AND PAKISTAN.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap said he had ordered the Bureau of Animal Industry to step up implementation of preventive measures in airports and

seaports, particularly in the cities of Davao and General Santos due to their proximity to Indonesia.

"I have also directed the BAI to remain vigilant in banning the entry of live birds and intensify surveillance operations on migratory birds, which are known carriers of the deadly H5N1 avian influenza virus," Yap said.

There have also been recent reports of AI infections in Myanmar and Pakistan.

As of Dec. 18, the World Health Orga-

nization reported that the H5N1 strain of bird flu has infected 340 people with 209 fatalities since the virus first resurfaced in Asia in 2003.

Last Dec. 13, an AI infected person died in the Banten province of Indonesia.

There have also been recent reports of AI infections in Myanmar and Pakistan.

BAI director Davinio Catbagan said the AI laborato-

ry in Pampanga continues to collect blood samples from birds to ensure that the Philippines' P160-billion poultry industry remains free from bird flu.

He said the BAI had also improved its control measures to monitor the movement of ducks, which can be carriers of the bird flu, and had ordered suppliers and growers to secure permits for their transfer/movement.

The BAI, Catbagan added, carries out strict monitoring and control measures to prevent domestic poultry and ducks to come in contact with migratory birds from the 20 critical areas identified under the Avian Influenza Prevention Program.

The Philippines, Singapore and Brunei remain the only bird flu-free countries in Southeast Asia.

On top of building more avian flu diagnostic labs similar to the facility in Pampanga, the BAI has also encouraged poultry farmers to implement their own security measures.

Catbagan said the importance of keeping Philippine poultry farms virus free cannot be underestimated, considering the possible devastating impact of an avian influenza outbreak on the multi-billion peso Philippine poultry industry.

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LIFESTYLE

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MONDAY ARTS & BOOKS • TUESDAY FITNESS • WEDNESDAY 28U • THURSDAY FOOD • FRIDAY FASHION & BEAUTY

Ilocano experience

San Nicolas Ilocos Norte
Day 1: Welcome! Greet each other
and say every goodby

earthen pots rebirth

By Cristina Arzadon
Inquirer Northern Luzon
Photos by Melvyn Calderon

SAN NICOLAS, ILOCOS Norte—The ancient art of terra-cotta pottery in this northern town has been given a facelift with the revival of the lowly *banga* (cooking pot), which has become an icon of Ilocano heritage and traditional occupation that dates back to the turn of the 19th century.

The Ilocos terra-cotta manufacturing had been largely dismissed as a vanishing industry until the community began noticing the historical value of pottery as an enduring monument to the handmade craft that now symbolizes San Nicolas' heritage.

There could not have been a better way of preserving San Nicolas traditional industry than paying tribute to the ancient craft through the Rang-ay ti Damulian, a pottery festival on the occasion of the town's feast later this month.

Mayor Alfredo Valdez is largely credited for reviving the town's cottage industry

in 1998 after the town's then Mayor, then Vice Mayor, and the late Sen. Pimentel, the biggest commercial strip in San Nicolas, commissioned the town's potters to produce the bricks for the commercial complex.

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'All is calm, all is bright'
Sleep in heavenly peace

WHEN MY COPY OF THE last edition of *Town and Country* arrived, I started leafing through it from back to front, as I usually do. But I never got past Monique Vilconco's full-page photograph of saffron-robed monks walking on one of the long galleries of Angkor Wat on the issue's last page.

Manuel Chavez's caption, "All is calm, all is bright," summed up what Angkor is today and what, for me, Angkor has always been, a place of total peace.

I went into the Cambodian jungle to see Angkor in 1968 when I was an architecture student, totally unprepared for the grandeur of temples resisting the onslaught of nature.

It was a place where giant trees violently asserted nature's power by insisting on growing over immense stone constructions that for centuries nobly fought back the forces of nature to survive.

The sense of timeless dignity of temples in the dense jungle was unforgettable.

Laced with intricate stone detailing, long walkways with exquisitely carved stone statuary and stunning bas-relief on every single wall formed a network of corridors that

From the ravages of the Indochinese war and the genocidal Pol Pot regime, Angkor Wat has been restored as a sanctuary of peace

led pilgrims quietly and meditatively away from the wide open temple exterior toward the inner sanctum, a place where "all is calm, all is bright."

Angkor was quiet in 1968. I felt as if I was the only person there. There was a sense of peace I had never experienced before.

Return

When I returned 37 years later, I was one of thousands of picture-taking tourists.

The statuary I remembered so vividly had vanished. The little that

remained was decapitated, dismembered, and, in many instances, eyes were violently gouged out.

The temples were skeletons of what I remembered them to be, their corridors now bare. Architectural details, stone flooring and bas-relief were all brutally hacked away during what was a terrible period of war.

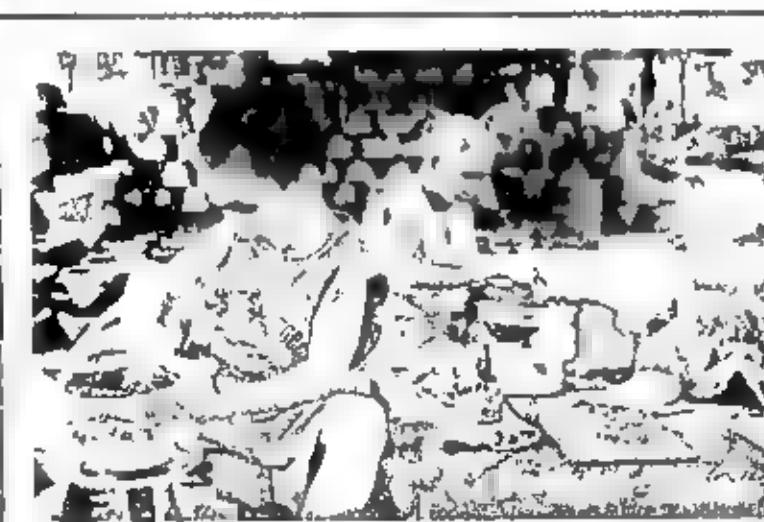
Corridors, now filled with ranks of flashbulb-popping tourists, no longer spoke with the serene silence of lost Angkor, or so I thought, until I saw in Monique's photograph evidence that the recent wave of turbulence weathered by Angkor during this stage of its life was over.

Although it is no longer the Angkor that I knew, from revisiting it I now recognize that the brutal experience the Cambodian people have survived had caused a search for a new, different place where "all is calm, all is bright."

This is the season for us to end turmoil and come back to our own place where all is calm, all is bright.

Best wishes for a calm and bright Christmas.

Feedback is welcome at pride.place@gmail.com



THIRD GENERATION Five-year-old Eugene Rangapan starts young with pottery beside his role and role model, Nana Pa-ul.



Ilocano earthen . . .

From page C1

He has made it a policy for every construction project in his town to include bricks in the building's materials to help generate income for San Nicolas potters

Ilocos churches

The other enduring symbol of terra cotta is still plastered across Ilocos Norte with the presence of majestic churches built out of bricks during the latter part of the 19th century.

Oral history says the bricks that built these churches came from the kilns of San Nicolas.

The Ilocos Norte Travel Guidebook, for instance, chronicled that four brick ovens were built in the town by the end of the Spanish era, giving rise to a belief that San Nicolas' folk provided the bricks that were used in building turn-of-the-century Ilocos churches.

Brick-manufacturing, to this day, is regarded as Ilocos Norte's thriving ancient industry. One of the more recent historical buildings San Nicolas' artisans take pride in is the posh Fort Ilocandia Resort Hotel in the seaside village of Calayab in Laog City.

President Ferdinand Marcos had the brick hotel built in 1983 to accommodate guests in time for the

wedding of his youngest daughter, Irene, to businessman Gregorio Araneta III.

First Lady Imelda Marcos supposedly commissioned an entire village of potters in San Nicolas to produce bricks for the 200-plus-room hotel.

Amancio Bernardo, then a high-school freshman, was among those who made the bricks used at the hotel. Now 40, Bernardo remains a potter in probably the biggest pottery industry in San Nicolas today.

Tribute

The Rangapan siblings—Violeta, Josephina and Virgilio—set up the pottery business as a tribute to their mother, Paulina, who taught them the craft of pot making.

Nana Pa-ul started producing pots when she was barely 10 years old, having grown to a family of potters.

Now 76, Nana Pa-ul, recognized as an outstanding San Nicolense in 2006, is still doing what she does best: molding and shaping cooking pots.

Josephina said her mother starts the day early at the shop and could produce over 100 small cooking pots by the end of the day.

"Her domain is cooking pots. The younger ones do not have the patience to produce pots because it demands special care and tough labor,

like nurturing a baby," she said.

Located in the village of Barabar, the manufacturing area does not have any signage, which is typical to a cottage industry.

But motorists cruising along the San Nicolas-Dingras road in eastern Ilocos Norte could not miss them. Freshly baked red-coated earthenware line the road while hundreds of newly molded pots spill to the sugar cane fields around the more than 200 sq m lot.

Iron sheets protect at least 16 potters from the searing Ilocos sun as they work using handmade molding wheels.

To the Rangapan siblings, pottery had been just a means to feed their families, until their products got the attention of neurosurgeon Joven Cuanang, medical director at St. Luke's Medical Center in Quezon City.

Cuanang, a native of Batac City, owns the Sitio Remedios beach resort where a heritage village sits. The resort has become a tourist magnet in Currinao town.

It was Cuanang who invited Paganian artist and sculptor Mark Valenzuela to provide a workshop for San Nicolas potters so they could acquire new techniques in terra-cotta pottery. Cuanang later commissioned Valenzuela to create terracotta pieces that would be installed in his resort.



BURNAY, SAN NICOLAS-STYLE. This is an antique jar distinctly San Nicolas that uses bottle caps as markings.

cotta pieces that would be installed in his resort.

The two met through Ilocos Norte tourism officer Rene Guatlo during the "Dula sa Lapuk" traveling terracotta exhibit at the Cultural Center of the Philippines in 2005.

Valenzuela, 27, a painter, has earned his mark in terra-cotta making since he started using clay as a medium in 2004.

Those in the terra-cotta business had branded him a "maverick artist" because of his meteoric rise as a sculptor. He has mounted a solo exhibit in Metro Manila and is set to display his creations in Singapore next year.

Products

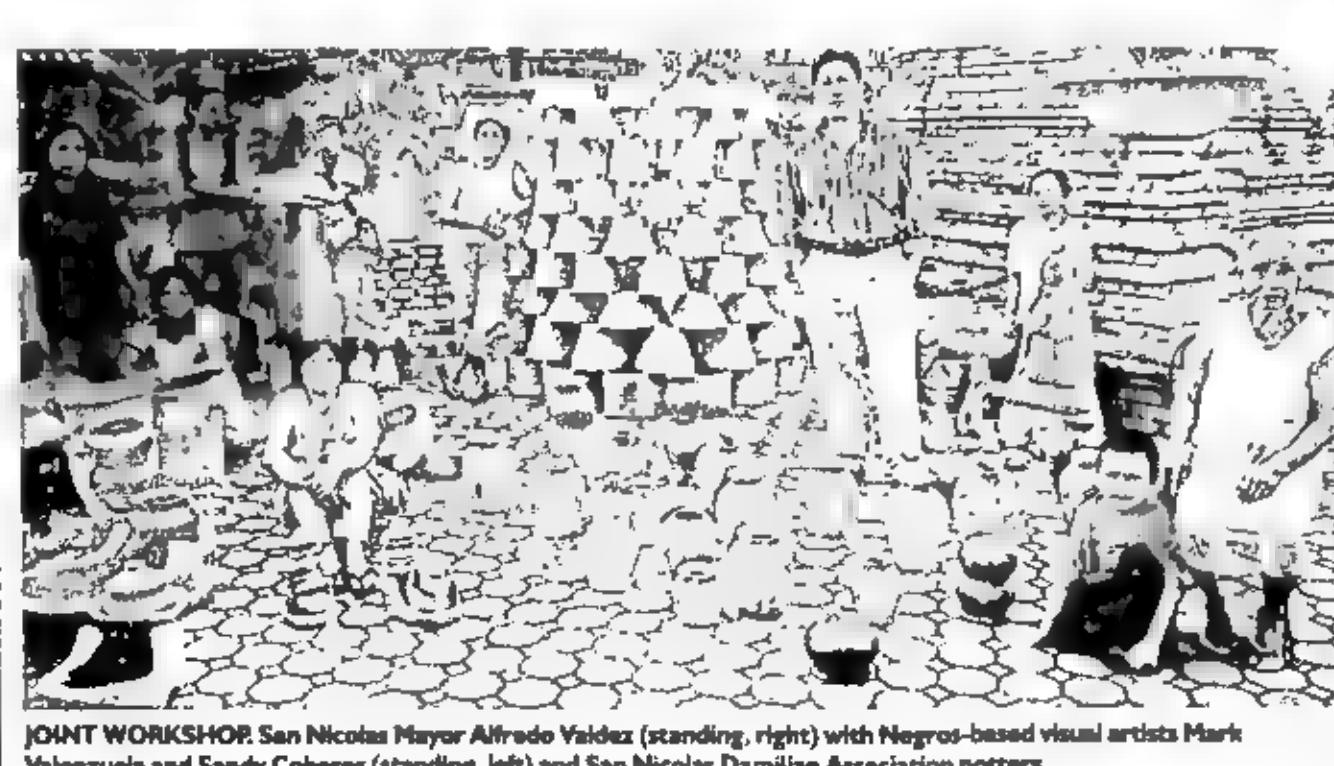
San Nicolas' pottery pieces, which range from cooking and flower pots, water jars, stoves, well casings, to roof tiles and bricks, are more functional than decorative, leaving Valenzuela, who worked with another sculptor, Sandy Coberos, from Sagay, Negros Occidental, in providing new techniques for the potters during the workshops.

"I agreed to do the workshop with them because I was looking forward to an exchange of techniques," he said.

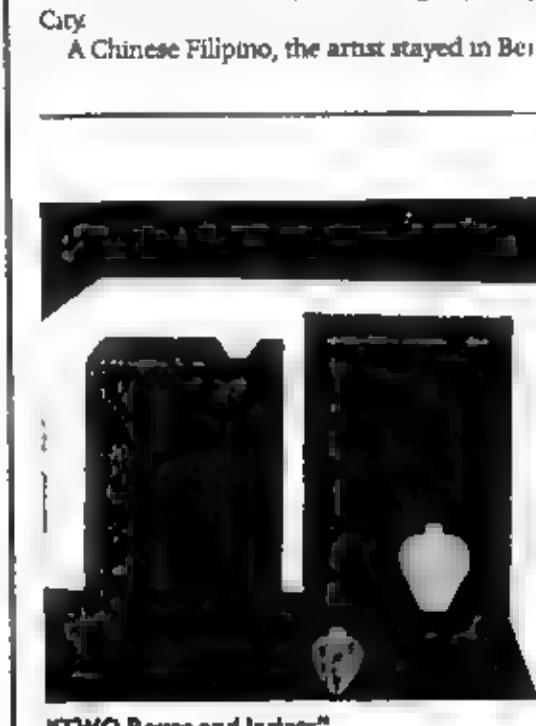
He said Ilocos clay was better than the type they used in Dumaguete. "It does not easily crack even when exposed to air or sunlight. In Dumaguete, we wrap our clay with plastic to keep the air, and we keep them from the sun," he said.

The workshop products will be on display at the town hall during the Damil festival on Dec. 28.

Potter Pablo Capati III, who studied pottery in Japan and California, was invited to open the exhibit with Valenzuela as curator.



JOINT WORKSHOP. San Nicolas Mayor Alfredo Valdez (standing, right) with Negros-based visual artists Mark Valenzuela and Sandy Coberos (standing, left) and San Nicolas Damil Association potters



"TWO Boxes and Jars"

Charlie

By Constantino C. Tejero

CHARLIE CO AND NUNELUCIO Alvarado, two of the more prominent artists of Negros Occidental, are co-founders of a small socially committed group called Black Artists of Asia. Having sprung from the same soil of what has long been known as a social volcano, they naturally gravitate toward Social Realism.

It is SR of the edgier kind, the one more deeply wallowing in social evils, what is identified as the New Objectivism. This is an incendiary mix of expressionism and surrealism that almost always deals with portraying evil.

Rooed thus in the same locale and socio-political background, Co and Alvarado create artworks that have related looks, exude a similar spirit, and are characterized by the same concern for social problems. Both deploy simplified forms, sharply angular figures, motifs from lower mythology and folk religion, and a vigorous colorism that chiefly consists of primary and secondary colors of bordering on neon hues.

This is all reminiscent of George Grosz, Karel Appel and the Cobra, particularly in the chudlike quality and macabre humor of their harsh, brutal imagery, and also the use of motifs from mythology and folklore. It is an art of vitality and force.

But while Alvarado is nourished more or less by his region and local issues, such as the plight of the sugarcane plantation workers, Co's aspires to be more global in reach as he explores the evils wrought upon the common man by class and economics, politics and religion.

Consider Co's latest exhibit "Portraits of Chinamen," pieces in oil on canvas, until Dec. 31 in Galleria Duemila, 210 Loring St., Pasay City.

A Chinese Filipino, the artist stayed in Be-

LIFESTYLE

HK art auction raises funds for charity

ARTWORKS DONATED BY FILIPINO artists under Galerie Joaquin helped raise some P1.4 million for the International Care Ministries (ICM), a Hong Kong-based

charity helping indigent families in the Visayas and Mindanao.

In a bidding attended by over 600 guests in the black-tie banquet at the ball-

"PAGHAHANGA,"
by Dominic Rubio



room of the JW Marriott Hotel Hong Kong, a medium-sized Alcuaz triogue raised HK\$65,000 (P357,500).

A 48" x 72" mixed-media by Carlo Magno, "Summer Solstice," III raised \$65,000 (P357,500).

A major work by Dominic Rubio, "Old Manila (Pagahanga)," raised \$85,000 (P467,500).

The three artworks were included among the 15 items of the live-auction portion of the fundraiser.

Smaller works were included in the silent auction. A Nell Campos 24" x 20" work generated \$12,000. An abstract diptych by Karina Balyut brought in \$8,000. A Benito 24" x 20" work raised \$8,000.

ICM's feeding program provides 25 needy families in each participating slum with weekly food supplements of 4-kg packages of rice.

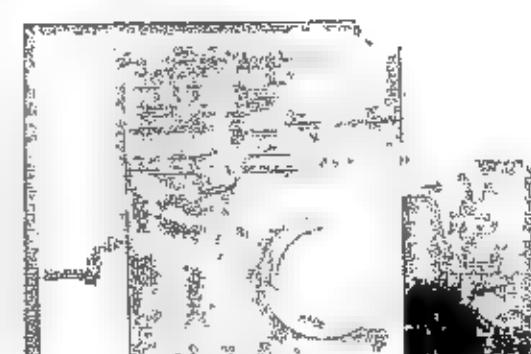
Every week, the local church partnering with ICM holds classes on basic health, character development (integrity, responsibility, anger management) and religion.

ICM's medical program provides healthcare services for the poor.

ICM also runs a livelihood program for the poor.



"TRILOGUE," by Juvenal Sanso



"SUMMER Solstice" III, by Carlo Magno

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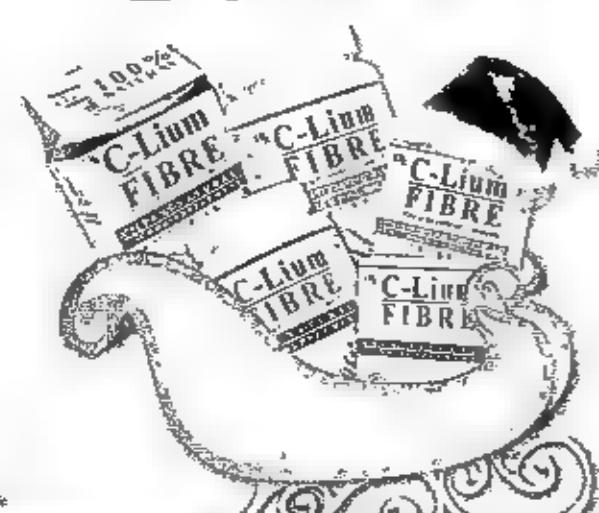
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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

D1



BALLET Philippines' "Snow White," created by Effie Nañas of Effie Nañas DanCenter

ALVIN Santos is the perfect Pinocchio in the Ballet Manila production staged by Osias Barroso.

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"PINOCCHIO" is short and sweet, fast-paced and full of "happy steps."

Christmas ballets delight children

By Elka Krystle Requinta
Contributor

THIS DECEMBER, BALLET RESTAGINGS of two well-loved children's classics left the young in open-mouthed wonder, proving the timelessness of both productions Ballet Philippines' (BP) "Snow White" and Ballet Manila's "Pinocchio."

The Grimm Brothers' fairytale was brought to life in a modern opus by Effie Nañas, owner of Effie Nañas DanCenter (formerly Effie Nañas School of Classical Ballet).

The steps and lifts are safe, but did not fail to showcase the dancers in the 16 shows BP mounted in just two weeks in the Cultural Center of the Philippines Main Theater.

Carissa Adea glowed as dainty Snow White in the Disney-style blue-red-and-white dress. The 24-year-old was wonderfully arched and effortlessly threw out her grand jetés. She teetered for a bit while whipping out pirouettes during the wedding scene, but was able to recover quickly.

The audience held their breath in Adea's romantic pas de deux with Angel Gabriel's Prince Charming, who had such exacting fish dives but was a little unsteady in his solo divertissements.

Of the seven comical dwarfs who were natural favorites in heavy rubber masks, Naomi Tolome-Jaena's naughty Dopey is the most delightful character. But all of their cartwheels and spouts, especially during their head-bopping number, elicited applause from the audience.

Hilarious, too, were Patrick Rebullida's obnoxious Queen and Ronelson Yadao's fleeting Huntsman, while the unitard-clad corps de ballet (courtesy of Arturo Cruz) of birds, butterflies, dragonflies, bats, trees, muses and a makeshift horse did a fancy job of building the light-hearted atmosphere for its stars.

The Prince's friends, led by Rhea Dumand (CCP Dance School principal) and Biag Gaongen in white-and-gold tutus and taffeta, provided elegance (and stretched the wedding scene longer) to the show, last produced eight years ago.

Adding to the "wow effect" of the fantasy show in its fourth restaging by Ramonette Victoria was the dwarfs' house that split open in the middle, as well as the gigantic mirror that was actually a mere screen which bore a big hole in the curtain.

Ballet Philippines caps its 38th season with "Latin Heat," March 14-16, 2008, at the CCP Little Theater.

'Pinocchio'

Now on its third staging, the much-applauded "Pinocchio," staged by Ballet Manila artistic associate Osias Barroso at the vast Alw Theater, elicited excited squeals from children as young as 3 years old.

The ballet is short and sweet; fast-paced and full of "happy steps" very much like Barroso, who, in an interview, said he was influenced by choreographer Tony Fabella.

After much applause at curtain call, the audience now clamors for a lengthened version that could show off BM's precise dancers some more.

CHRISTMAS/D2



PATRICK Rebullida (in black) as the obnoxious Queen

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LIFESTYLE

D2



LOURDES Montinola, Pitoy Moreno, Nene Quimson, Lorna Laurel and Gerry Contreras



CARMEN Guerrero Nakpil, Ateta Gana, Pandot Ocampo and Erlinda Panilio

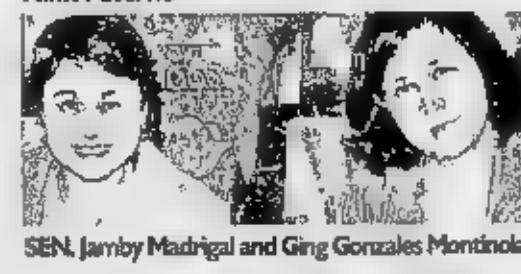


LIZZA G. Nakpil, David Guerrero, Chris Tan, Ton Gatmaitan and Cookie Guerrero

Party for Carmen Guerrero Nakpil's 'Legends & Adventures'



LORNA Kaiaw Tirol, Ivi Avellana Cosio and Ninit Paterno



SEN. Jamby Madrigal and Ging Gonzales Montinola



GIA Nakpil and Gemma Araneta



CESAR and Joy Virata



JAKE Macasaet, Carmen Guerrero Nakpil, Manila Mayor Fred Lim and Chito Madrigal Collantes

A YEAR AFTER FANS OF "MYSELF, ELSEWHERE," by Carmen Guerrero Nakpil, relished the first volume of her autobiography, they will have their curiosity rewarded with the publication of its sequel, "Legends & Adventures," which covers the period between 1946 and 1983.

To launch the new volume, Chito Madrigal Collantes hosted a scintillating book party at her North Forbes Park residence.

Among those present were personalities from the lush era of journalism, politics and foreign relations captured in the book, including Joaquin Roces Jr., son of Don Chino, Lorna Laurel, Isabel Ongpin, Cesar and Joy Virata, Mayor Fred Lim, Mark Higgins (son of fashion doyenne Salvacion Lim), David Eala (grandson of Doroy Valencia), Ivi Cosio (daughter of Bert Avellana), Justice Lolong Lazaro, David Guerrero (son of Leoni Guerrero), Marita Roces Guerrero (daughter of Manila Times owner Ramon Roces), Raul and Pilar Teehankee (widow of Chief Justice Dingdong Teehankee).

Also present were writers Lorna K. Tirol, Sylvia Mayuga, Linda Panilio, Eggy Apostol, Jake Macasaet, Zenaida Seva, Chit and Vergel Santos.

"Legends & Adventures" retains the sharp observations, the charm and fine writing of the earlier volume which dealt with the town of Ermita, the author's early years and the devastation of World War II. To the new volume, she adds the fast-paced, scandal-ridden excitement of post-war Manila, rebuilt, feisty and independent, as the Sun City of the Far East, where the young war widow covered the hard news and survived new perils.

"A new life is riskier than the old one, as any tattered survivor will tell you," she writes of herself. "The steely rules of old Ermita are gone and the only etiquette is Dog Eat Dog."

As an assertive, impudent journalist, she moves through several decades of "Legends" (the politicians, writers, artists and celebrities) and "Adventures" in newsrooms, communes, palaces and hovels in New York, Tripoli, Florence, Beijing, Kazakhstan, Paris, always just a step ahead of all kinds of danger. But she's also a working mother, a public servant and, first of all, a writer.

"Legends & Adventures" has more pages than its predecessor, 50 more photos, and a clever Andy Warhol-esque portrait on its



(CLOCKWISE, from top left) Mandy Eduque, Carmen Guerrero Nakpil and Chito Madrigal Collantes



GEMMA Araneta, Gia Nakpil, Carmen Guerrero Nakpil and Lizza G. Nakpil

cover which is a nod to the eight lives Nakpil has had since 1945.

Both "Legends & Adventures" and "Myself, Elsewhere" (winner of the National Book Award 2007, Manila Critics Circle) are available at National Book Store, Powerbooks and Fully Booked. Call Nakpil Publishing, 8172940 or 0921-4011480.

New book on Bulacan heritage

A NEW BOOK FEATURING THE contributions of Bulacan in the arts has been recently released. Bulacan has more than her share of national heroes, great composers and poets, artists and writers, and cultural, historical and religious landmarks.

In this attractive, richly illustrated book, cultural author Amadis Ma Guerrero takes the reader on an armchair tour of the province and reviews Bulacan's prominent personalities in the arts. It focuses on the achievements, past and present, in architecture, visual arts, literature, music, dance, theater, and crafts.

Produced by the Provincial Youth, Sports, Employment, Arts & Culture Office (PYSEACO) of Bulacan and editorial supervision, design and print production by Tactical Mix, "Bulacaña" is the next best thing to an actual educational tour of the province. Copies are available at PYSEACO, Provincial Capitol, Malolos, Bulacan, tel. nos.: (044) 7916604; (02) 6874920; 0917-8822364.

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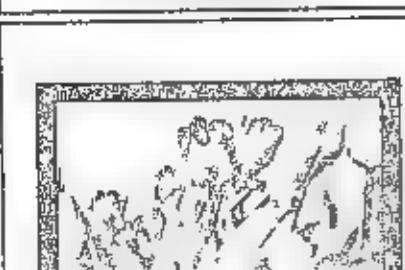
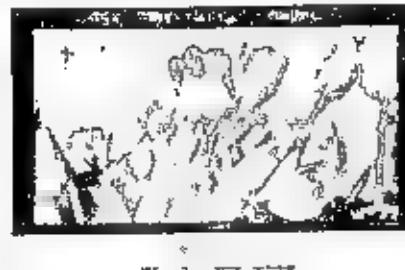
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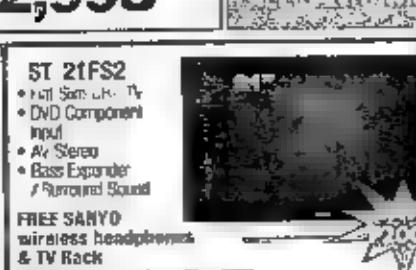
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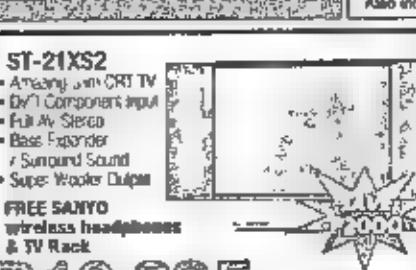
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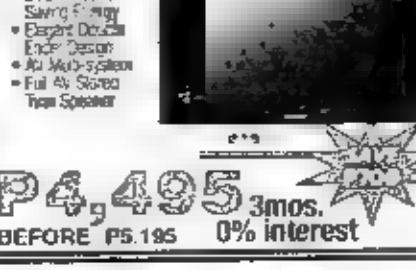
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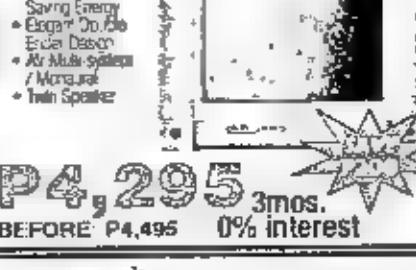
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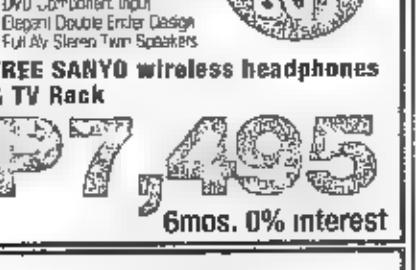
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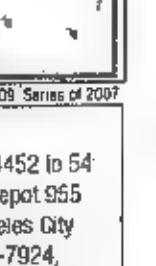
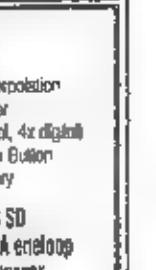
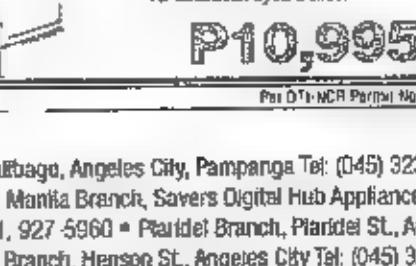
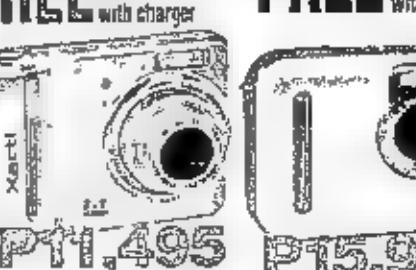
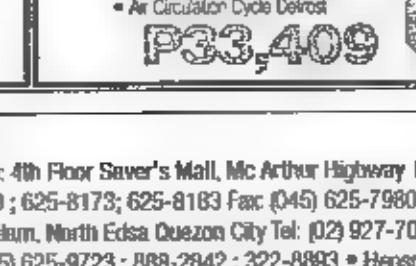
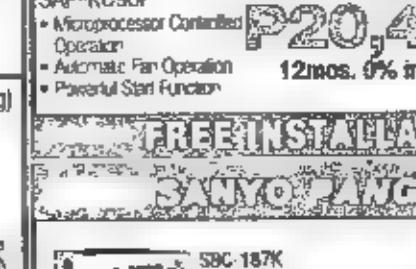
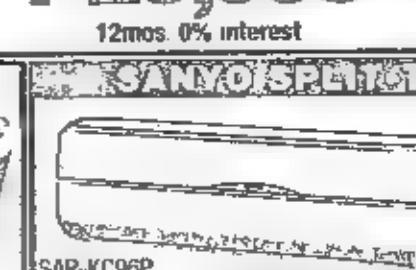
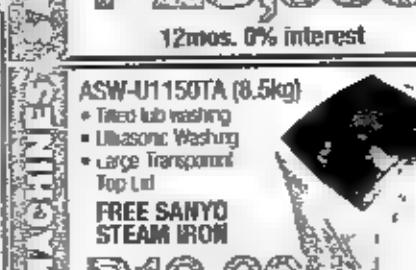
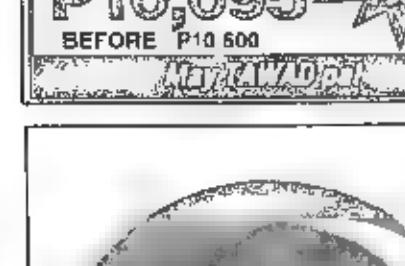
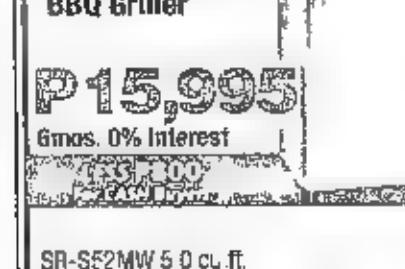
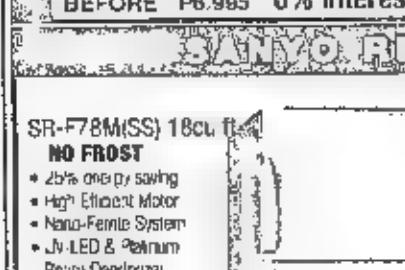
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INQUIRER photo tandem
Ariel Ureta, left; and
Winnie Cordero, center,
with ABS-CBN executive
Peter Musngi.
PHOTOS BY NEDO ROTONI

A marriage of the airwave

Welcome to TeleRadyo—radio pretending to be TV, or is it actually the other way around?

By Pocholo Concepcion

TWO RADIO HOSTS OPEN THEIR SHOW with barefaced banter: "Ito po ang batang-batang si Ariel Ureta ... at ito naman ang sekssing-sekssing si Winnie Cordero ..."

The humor hits hard because they're also being seen on TV.

Welcome to TeleRadyo, the broadcasting convergence in which ABS-CBN's top-rating radio station, dzMM 630 AM, is also beamed on Sky Cable's TV Channel 26.

TeleRadyo is carried by regional cable operators via satellite nationwide. Soon, it will also be seen overseas, on The Filipino Channel.

Ureta, voted Best Variety Program Host for Radio in the recent KBP Golden Dove Awards, jests: "Nagsuot muna ho ako ng amerikana, may photographer kasi, kinukunan kami, taga-Inquirer pala. Bumili ho kaya ng diyaryo simula bukas ..."

Shining moment

The program, "Todo-Todo, Waang Preno" (Mondays to Fridays, 10:30 a.m. to 12 nn) is a freewheeling variety show that's as entertaining as it's informative. Discussion subjects could be as frivolous as what's good to eat on a rainy day, or as serious as the role that blood pressure plays in one's health. It has a daily contest in which a "word for the day" is defined. (Example: What does "mataghay" mean?)

It sounds interesting enough on radio, but looks more dynamic on TV as the viewer sees how the program hosts interact.

TeleRadyo started airing only in April this year, and one of its shining moments occurred just two months ago.

A few minutes after the Glorietta blast on Oct. 19, dzMM Radyo Patrol reporters were scrambling to get to the site but were caught in traffic.

One of them was told to get out of the service vehicle and take the MRT. Another was advised to flag down the first motorcycle rider he sees and offer him P200 for a ride to Glorietta.

Fundamentals

"In the meantime, imagine that the ENG (electronic news gathering) vans of both ABS-CBN and GMA 7 were also stuck in traffic, so nauna kami," says Peter Musngi, head of the ABS-CBN Radio and Sports divisions and the guy who put TeleRadyo together.

"We had been practicing with 3G cell phone video, but it was more of MMS, mga stills. For the Glorietta newscast, sinubukan din namin ang 3G, but we did not know how long [the video image] would last at marami kasing im-perfections sa cel. phone video."

Raw footage of the blast, using a 3G, made it to "TV Patrol" and ANC. It was shot by Radyo Patrol reporter David Oro, who had gone inside Glorietta with his phone.

Musngi says the hazy images were forgivable since the situation was chaotic, anyway. Plus, CNN also relies on cel. phone videos and photos when correspondents file reports, as in the recent Myanmar crisis.

"It doesn't matter that you're radio pretending to be television. You have to be both, you need to have the fundamentals," Musngi explains. "Pag sinabi naming una sa balita, hindi lang audio ngayon yan ... It's a marriage of radio reporting and TV journalism."

Concept refined

Musngi recalls that the idea for TeleRadyo started when ABS-CBN chair/CEO Gabby Lopez asked if it was possible to put DZMM on cable TV. He (Musngi) said it was, Lopez specified that he wanted something more professional than just using a webcam.

The concept was refined after experiencing difficulty when the 4 a.m. dzMM news report was first simulcast on ANC. Two TV cameras ate up a lot of space in the radio booth. So Musngi thought of using two special types of cameras that were just lying around the station—the robotic camera, which is operated with a joystick from a remote location and doesn't need a cameraman, and the lipstick, so called because it looks like a lipstick and very

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PLDT presented the stunning actress Marian Rivera as the face of the new PLDT Touch Card Special Edition. Presenting Ms. Rivera at the well-attended media launch held in Makati are (left) Mr. Dan Barra, PLDT Retail Business Head and (right) Mr. Eric Alberto, PLDT Senior Vice President for Customer Sales and Marketing.



PLDT presented the stunning actress Marian Rivera as the face of the new PLDT Touch Card Special Edition. Presenting Ms. Rivera at the well-attended media launch held in Makati are (left) Mr. Dan Barra, PLDT Retail Business Head and (right) Mr. Eric Alberto, PLDT Senior Vice President for Customer Sales and Marketing.



Marian Rivera poses with the PLDT Sales and Marketing Executives.



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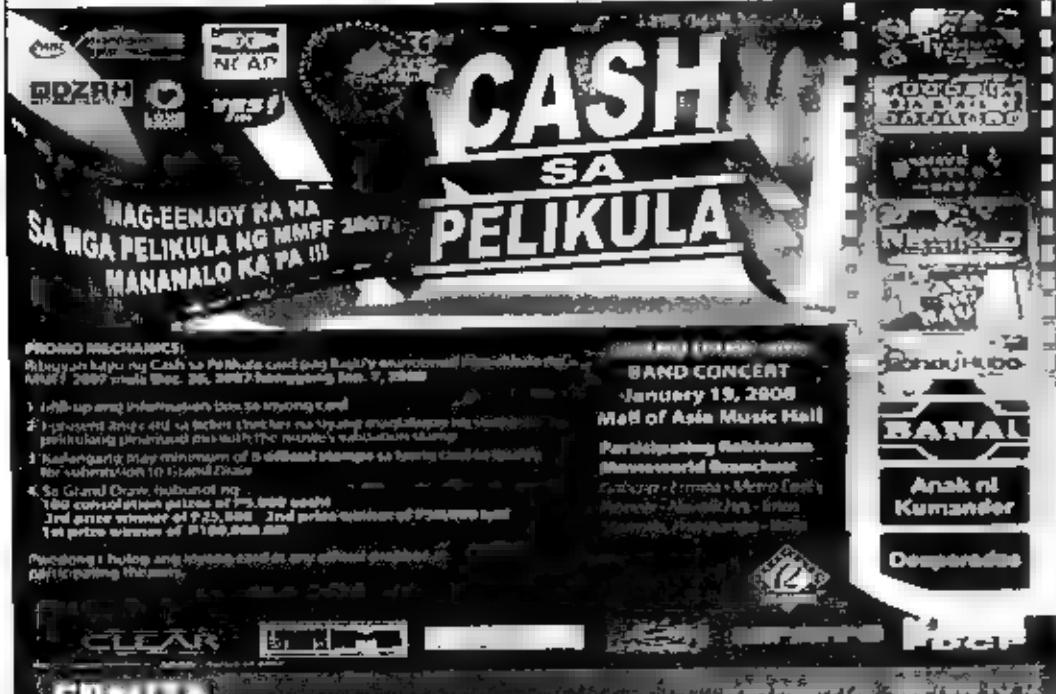


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GALLERIA

1 HITMAN • THX 1:30 3:30 5:30 7:30	6 ENCHANTED 12:50 3:00 5:10 7:20
2 MARTIAN CHILD .2.20 2:45 5:10 7:35	7 GRINDHOUSE: DEATH PROOF 1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45
3 ELIZABETH: GOLDEN AGE 12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30	8 indieSine: 3 DAYS of DARKNESS 1:00 3:00 5:00
4 GAME PLAN 1:05 3:15 5:25 7:35	9 BATANES 1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45
5 THE GOLDEN COMPASS 12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30	10 BEOWULF 2:00 4:40 7:20 10:00



ERRATA

1 GRINDHOUSE: DEATH PROOF 1:00 3:20 5:35 7:50 10:00	6 ENCHANTED 12:40 2:55 5:10 7:25 9:40
2 indieSine: 3 DAYS of DARKNESS 2:40 4:30 6:20 8:10	7 GAME PLAN <i>Midtown</i> 1:00 3:10 5:20 7:30 9:40
3 BEOWULF 12:00 2:10 4:20 HITMAN 6:35 8:20 10:00	1 MARTIAN CHILD 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 10:00
4 HOOD of HORROR 1:00 3:10 5:20 7:30 9:40	2 ELIZABETH: GOLDEN AGE 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
5 BATANES	3 THE GOLDEN COMPASS

METRO EAST

1 MARTIAN CHILD 11:05 1:35 4:05 6:35 9:05	5 BEOWULF 1:00 3:35 6:10 9:00
2 ELIZABETH: GOLDEN AGE 1:30 3:55 6:25 9:00	6 ENCHANTED 1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00
3 GRINDHOUSE, DEATH PROOF 12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 9:00	7 THE GOLDEN COMPASS 1:20 3:55 6:30 9:05

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1 PASUKOB **3 HOOD of HORROR**
2 BATANES **4 THE GOLDEN COMPASS**

PIONEER

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ENTERTAINMENT



From page E1

A marriage ...

small but gives a bird's eye view of the booth.

The robotic was first used in basketball games; the lipstick, in billiard tournaments.

Not exactly new

A dyed-in-the-wool radio man, Musngi says TeleRadyo is not exactly a novel idea. He acknowledges that dzEC AM and dzRJ FM had already been airing their programs simulcast on their respective TV channels, but on a limited scope. Ramon Jacinto does it only for his Sunday morning radio program, broadcast on RJTV.

"In our case," Musngi points out, "tagalog all the way, 24/7. We really planned it for digital TV (accessible through the Net), although we have not launched it. In the meantime we put it on cable."

Musngi describes TeleRadyo as reality radio. "Kasi talaga sia, mga hosts at reporters namin, it's not

transporting them to another studio where they can do their radio program on a TV-oriented set," he says. "That's really our dzMM booth, dinagdagang lang namin ng fluorescent lamps para mas lumwanag."

One wonders why Ted Failon looks different on TeleRadyo, his hair disheveled and his eyes hidden by sunglasses. Musngi explains: "Ted came up to me and said, 'Boss okay lang ba, kasi ganun ako talaga sa umaga e.'"

Musngi conceded, with a small request: "Basta huwag lang gugulanit ang suot."

TeleRadyo is perfect for people who can't sit and wait for TV newscasts. On TeleRadyo's multiple screens are the following visual elements: the announcers plus the day's headlines, sports results, peso-dollar rate, temperature of key cities nationwide, text messages from listeners, basic food prices



"SEXY Winnie," "Youthful Ariel"—a whole new meaning on-cam.

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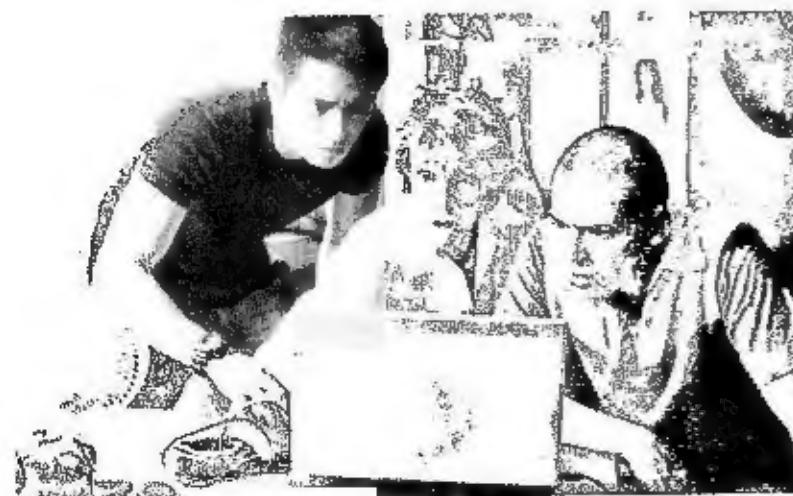
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2	THE GOLDEN COMPASS	KINGDOM
3	KINGDOM	ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE
4	FREAD GLAUS / HAIRSPRAY	THE KINGDOM
5	PREMIERE	THE KINGDOM
6	ELIZABETH	DEATH PROOF
7	RESERVED	Cinema 2000 Waterfront (Makati) Tel. 815.4214/16
8	RESERVED	1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
9	RESERVED	2 ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE
10	PASUKO / BATANES	3 THE KINGDOM
11	RESERVED	4 DEATH PROOF
12	RESERVED	Cinema 2000 Waterfront (Plaza) Tel. (044) 795.3320
13	RESERVED	1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
14	RESERVED	2 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
15	RESERVED	3 THE KINGDOM
16	RESERVED	Cinema 2000 Waterfront (Plaza) Tel. (044) 795.3320
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ENTERTAINMENT

METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2007



(INQUIRER Entertainment is running this MMFF guide to help moviegoers plan their holiday cinema tour. The festival runs from tomorrow till Jan. 7, 2008.)

"Banal"

ComGuild Films
Stars: Christopher de Leon, Alfred Vargas, Paolo Contis, Cass Ponti, Paolo Paraiso, Joey Smith, Evangelina Pascual, Ina Alegre, Leo Martinez, Roy Alvarez
Directed by Cesar Apolinario

Two cops—one idealistic (Contis), the other corrupt (Vargas)—undergo SWAT training with a topnotch but sadistic mentor (De Leon). The rookies' mettle and values are later tested when they uncover an assassination plot against the visiting Pope. Graded B by the Cinema Evaluation Board, the suspense-drama "sets a new tempo for Pinoy action films," according to a CEB reviewer (see related story below). The board also commends debuting director Apolinario, a GMA 7 news reporter, for his "firm grasp of the material. It's well-researched and correctly portrays local media." The board similarly praises the performances of Vargas, Contis, and De Leon.



a fest entry

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

DIRECTOR CESAR APOLINARIO AND producer Ina Alegre of ComGuild worked closely with post-production house Optima and film lab Opticolors to finish the Metro Manila Film Festival entry "Banal."

"We followed an integrated approach to filmmaking," said Marc Ambat, chief technical officer of Optima Digital (OD) and general manager of Opticolors.

This "integrated approach," first reported in INQUIRER Entertainment last April, allows independent filmmakers to avail of Optima's post-production and Opticolors' printing facilities.

Raw state

"Banal" was originally shot with a Panasonic P2 digital camera, Ambat related. "Although it's considered HDV (high-definition video), it's not a high-end digital camera."

Since it wasn't shot with a pricier camera, OD "took extra care of the images," Ambat said.

"What we did was convert the images to HD format," said Pete Jimenez, OD general manager and chief operating officer.

"We also endeavored to keep the material in its raw state," Ambat noted.

Film-like

The movie's film-like quality was achieved largely because the Optima team had worked closely with the film's director of photography Jay Linao.

"We had several meetings. We conducted tests to determine the parameters in lighting certain key scenes—whether interior/lamp-light or exterior/daylight."

The action movie, directed by first-time filmmaker Cesar Apolinario, also underwent "extensive color grading."

"The day that the film's rooftop climax was shot, it was cloudy," recalled Ambat. "The shoot began at 5:30 p.m. But in color grading, the scene's setting was changed from dusk to early afternoon."

Ambat was present on the set, lending his color-grading expertise to the "Banal" team. "I advised them on what can or cannot be done in the post-prod stage."

Computer-generated

A few computer-generated images were thrown in for good measure.

The Opticolor team added a 3-D CG helicopter in the same climactic scene.

"It was a computer-generated chopper," Jimenez related. "Des Sebastian, the head of our 3-D team, went to Villamor Air Base, to study the look of a PNP [Philippine National Police] chopper."

Since the filmmakers were working on a

Film academy proclaims awardees

By Marinel R. Cruz

JOSE JAVIER REYES' "KASAL, KASALI, Kasalo," a romantic comedy on the highs and lows of being newly weds, has bagged the biggest number of Luna Awards from the Film Academy of the Philippines (FAP) this year.

"Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo" or KKK, produced by Star Cinema, snagged the Best Picture citation from four other nominees—"Inang Yaya" (Unitel Productions), "Kaleido" (CenterStage Productions), "Kubrador" (MLR Films) and "Sukob" (Star Cinema).

KKK lead actress Judy Ann Santos beat veterans Gina Pareño ("Kubrador") and Maricel Soriano ("Inang Yaya") to the Best

Actress Award for her performance as Angie, Jed's (Ryan Agoncillo) headstrong wife. Santos was also nominated for her role as the domineering and ambitious Abby in "Don't Give Up On Us."

Shared trophy

Reyes is this year's Best Director awardee, and shared the Best Screenplay trophy with Mary Ann Bautista, also for KKK.

Pareño, who plays Angie's mother Charito, was proclaimed Best Supporting Actress.

Vito Cajili ran off with the Best Editing award for KKK.

John Lloyd Cruz coped the Best Actor

FILM/F4



"KASAL, Kasali, Kasalo"

ROMY HOMILLADA

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100% Nutrition from Nature.

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to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

BY JESS ABRERA

A diario novela by CARLO J. CAPARAS
To have and to hold
 Art: ARNEL A. AVETRIA



ATOMO AND WEBY

Here, Weboy. I got you a rock. Like our friendship, it can be broken only by an act of nature.

FOR YOU ATOMO
HERE'S A FRUITCAKE.
LIKE OUR FRIENDSHIP,
IT GETS BETTER
WITH AGE.

IT'S GOOD TO KNOW
WE'RE GREAT WITH
SYMBOLIC GESTURES.

BUT HONESTLY, I'D
RATHER HAVE
REAL GIFTS.

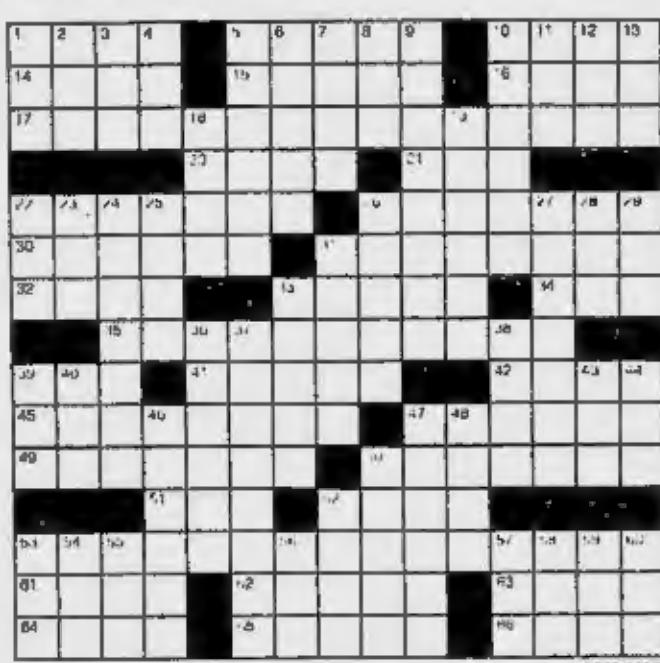


BY LYRA GARCELLANO

KIKO MACHINE



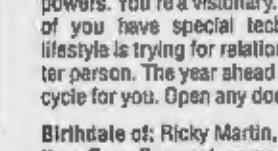
DAILY CROSSWORD



By Diane C. Baldwin

Columbia, MD

BY MANIX ABRERA



ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Definitely avoid disputes or arguments with partners, teachers, bosses and authority figures today. This includes the police. Everyone is looking for a fight.

Taurus (April 20 to May 20): Don't get involved in religious or political arguments today. Avoid arguments with professors if you're at school. Racial tensions can cause problems today. Be cool. Be patient.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Disputes about shared property, or who owns what, or who is responsible for what, are likely today. Avoid these at all costs. They will accomplish nothing.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Don't go head to head with someone over money issues or debt. It won't be a pretty picture. If you want to resolve something, wait until later in the week.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): The Sun is in your sign today, and it's opposed by fiery Mars, the planet of war and aggression. That's why everyone is in your face and people are so irritable! Just take baby steps.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You have lots of energy to work hard today; however, you might be too bossy or pushy. Don't be demanding. And don't let others push you around, either.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Be gentle and understanding with children today. However, romantic partners could be in trouble. Avoid arguments if you can. Fortunately, this tension will pass quickly.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Friends or group members might oppose your ideas about practically anything. This is just par for the course today. Don't take it personally. Later in the week, you will probably get your way.

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

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MONDAY,
DECEMBER 24, 2007

ENTERTAINMENT

Young stars rule

THEY MAY BE ONLY IN their tweens or teens, but young stars rule the roost in Hollywood this season.

Among the most popular and/or top-grossing young luminaries are Dakota Fanning, Zack Efron, Vanessa Hudgens, Miley Cyrus, Nikki Blonsky and Daniel Radcliffe.

Also clearly on her way to big-time stardom is complete newcomer Dakota Blue Richards, who clinched the plum role of Lyra Belacqua in the spectacular though controversial fantasy film, "The Golden Compass."

Not only did Richards'

character provide the movie with its central point of view, but she also figured in many of its key sequences, acting with Nicole Kidman, among other big stars. How did the teen come get to be so lucky?

First things first: She was named Dakota Blue because her mother wanted a mix of a place-name and a color. No, "Illinois Pink" didn't quite cut it. So, Dakota Blue it was—with no intended incursion into Dakota Fanning's territory.

In any case, Richards was so smitten with acting that she studied in a

ly "wild" for the ingenue lead character.

For his part, director Chris Weitz says she chose Richards simply because "she lit up the screen more than any of the other girls." Reviewers generally agree, typifying her performance in the movie as "enchanting."

Similarly impressed, producers have already cast her in a follow-up film, "The Secret of Moohacre," which will be shown next year.

Petite charmer

Also flying high this year is Ellen Page, a petite charmer who's just

been nominated as best actress by the Golden Globes for her edgy portrayal of the title character in the "sleeper" hit "Juno."

Unlike Richards, Page may be young, but she's been around for quite a while. She wanted to start acting at an early

YOUNG/F4

ELIZABETH: GOLDEN AGE PG13 1:00,3:30,6:00,8:30	MARTIAN CHILD G 12:50,3:10,5:30	THE GOLDEN COMPASS PG13 12:10,2:40,5:10
THE KINGDOM R13 12:50,3:15,5:40	DEATH PROOF R13 1:30,3:40,5:50	ELIZABETH: GOLDEN AGE PG13 12:30,3:00,5:30

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KATYA SANTOS GWEN GARCIA PRECIOUS ADONA

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3 days of darkness

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DECEMBER 12 to 24, 2007

MTRCB Rating: R18

Bahay Kubo
A Pinoy Man Po!

Maricel Soriano Eric Quizon
Marian Rivera Shaina Magdayao Yasmien Kurdi Eugene Domingo and Ms. Gloria Romero
Mark Herras Rayver Cruz Jiro Manio Bearwin Melly

A Film by Joel C. Lamangan, dgpt

Also Starring Isabella de Leon Sam Bumatay Rita Iringan

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ELIZABETH	MARTIAN CHILD	DEATH PROOF	GOLDEN COMPASS	ELIZABETH
1:05 3:55 6:45	2:30 4:50 7:10	12:50 5:10	1:15 4:00 6:45	3:20 GOLDEN COMPASS 12:45 6:15

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BATANES	ONE MORE CHANCE	THE KINGDOM	PASUKOB	ENCHANTED
4:50	12:45 3:40 6:35	12:10 4:50	3:00 7:20 BEOWULF 2:25 7:05	1:45 4:20 6:55

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JINGGOY ESTRADA AND LORNA TOLENTINO
BAYANI AGABAYANI EUGENE DOMINGO ARRON VILLAPLOR JULIAN ESTRADA
SHAINA MAGDAYAO RAYVER CRUZ
with the Special Participation of ADEL TAMANO

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THOU SHALL NOT KILL

BANANA

CHRISTOPHER DE LEON PAOLO CONTIS ALFRED VARGAS
Also starring PAOLO FARAZO CASSANDRA FONTI INA ALIGRE JOEY TEFY SMITH PEN MEDINA

With the Special Participation of EVANGELINE FESTIVAL, LEO MARTINEZ, ROD ALVAREZ, TITA SWANSON, CAMILO GEORGE, KAREN RADA, JET ALAGANGA
Spouse RATTI MACATAY, Maria MALETA ALVAREZ, Edna SAMMY AMBROSIO, and others. Directed by JET ALAGANGA. Produced by COMGUILD. Executive Producer: JENNIFER M. CRIST. Producers: MARIE MACATAY, RAY MACATAY, LISA MACATAY. Story: RAY MACATAY. Screenplay: RAY MACATAY. Cinematography: JET ALAGANGA. A LONGGO PRODUCTION PRESENTATION

